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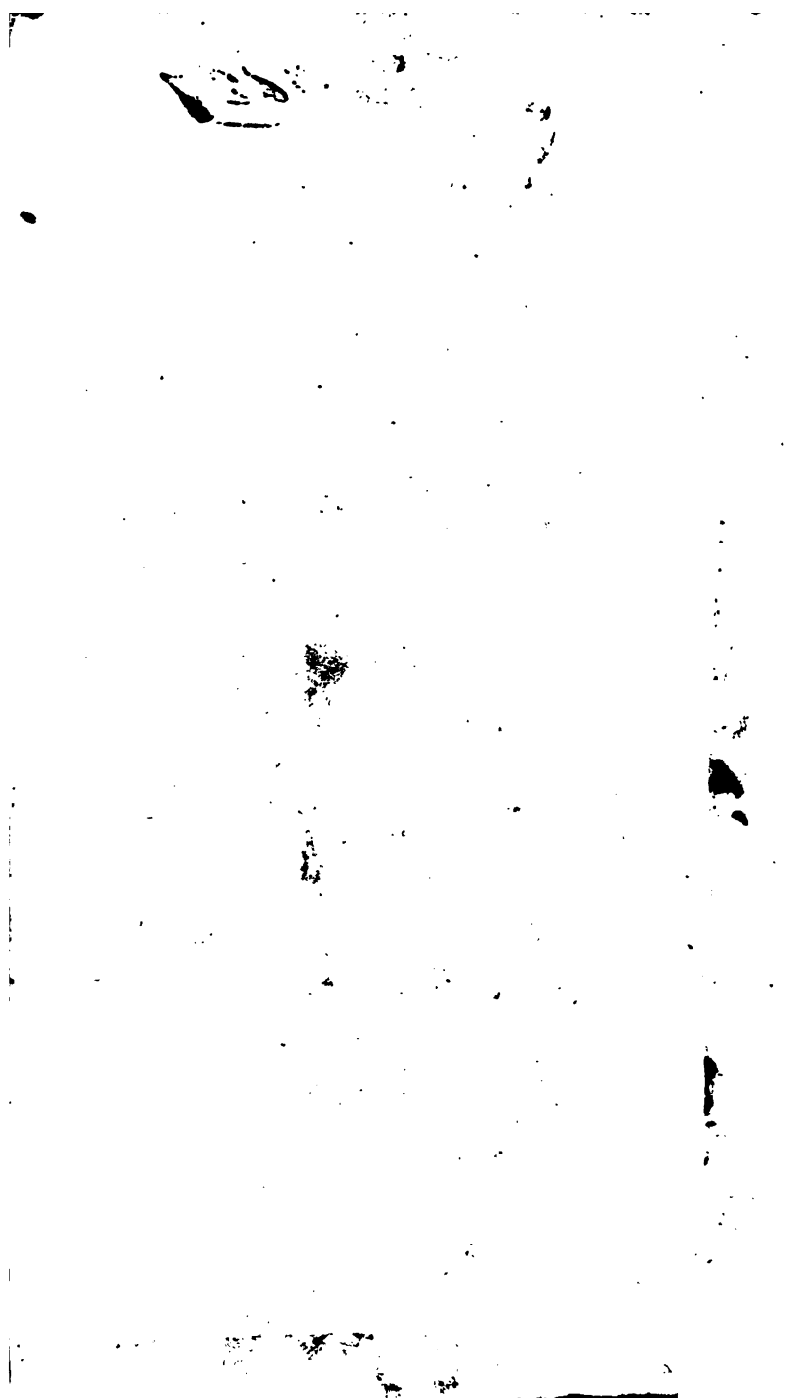
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THE CONVICT,

OR

NAVY LIEUTENANT.

A NOVEL.

By Mrs. PARSONS,

AUTHOR OF

THE MISER AND HIS FAMILY; MURRAY HOUSE;
THE MYSTERIOUS VISIT, &c. &c. &c.

"The ways of Heaven, though dark,
Are just; and oft' some guardian pow'r
Attends unseen, to save the innocent."

"And, Oh! in whatever garb misfortune approaches my
door, may humanity be in waiting, ready to lift the latch, and give her
comfort!"

FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

BRENTFORD;

PRINTED BY AND FOR P. NORBURY;

AND SOLD BY

T. OSTELL, AVE-MARIA-LANE;
CARPENTER AND CO. OLD-BOND-STREET;
EARLE, ALBEMARLE-STREET;
AND HATCHARD, PICCADILLY, LONDON.

1807.



THE CONVICT;

OR,

NAVY LIEUTENANT.

CHAPTER XIX.

“The rich and happy find friends and relations in every corner of the world; but the unfortunate child of poverty, the unhappy being who has no claims of affinity to save her from contempt, is only acknowledged by misery.”

WHEN we left our young orphan she was quietly settled in her school at Hereford. She did not part from her once kind benefactress without much pain at heart and many tears; yet her feelings were not so poignant as they would have been had

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the separation taken place some months sooner, before the mind of Mrs. Fitzwilliam had been poisoned by the insidious tales of her enemies. But the cold regards of that lady had chilled the warm affection of poor Fanny, who certainly evinced more sorrow when taking leave of Mrs. Bell, than on leaving the Abbey; and this circumstance did not fail of remark by the Miss Bruces to the ear of their aunt, as another proof of ingratitude and want of sensibility.

It was at this very period that lady was informed of the failure of the agent who was to pay little Fanny's small pension; and as he had quitted England, she could obtain no further information whatever of the child's early benefactor, but that he was lieutenant of the Vengeance, in the East-Indies.

She concluded it was useless to write, as in all probability the ship might be on its return; and therefore, in the uncertain contingency whether Thompson might be
alive,

alive, or if alive, whether he could, or would afford to continue the monthly allowance, she considered herself as the only friend of the poor orphan, and that by giving her a useful and advantageous education, such as might eventually enable her to get her own subsistence, she performed every duty humanity and benevolence could claim from her.

Most unfortunately for Fanny, the servant who accompanied her to the school, and delivered her to the care of Mrs. Frampton, was a creature devoted to the commands of her enemies; one who had always treated her with scorn and impertinence, well knowing that such behaviour was consonant to the wishes of her young ladies.

Proud of the office delegated to her of introducing the young stranger, and equally desirous to oblige her mistresses, and gratify her own little malice against the child of a wicked murderer, who was supported

by charity, yet shamefully put on a footing with Mrs. Fitzwilliam's own nieces, Mrs. Jenny resolved to be even with her who had so undeservedly been made an inmate of the parlour; and therefore requested to speak with Mrs. Frampton in private, after Fanny had been received, and left the room with one of the teachers.

"This little girl, Madam," said she, "being maintained by charity,—being, as 'tis reported, a base born child, and her mother hanged for murder, it is my lady's wish that she may be made useful, not a fine lady, but taught to do every thing to get her own bread, for that she must do.—She is proud and not very good tempered, so will require being kept down and made humble."

This speech extremely disconcerted Mrs. Frampton. She coldly thanked the malicious speaker, without farther enquiry, only adding,—“I hope Mrs. Fitzwilliam will have
cause

cause to be perfectly satisfied with my treatment and care of her young protegee."

Mrs. Jenny felt there was something repulsive to her communication in the look and words of the lady governess; but however she had done *her part* towards humbling the girl, and left the house in a cherished hope that she would soon be known for what she was—a charity child.

Mrs. Frampton was a woman of education and respectability; her school was in high estimation in the neighbourhood where she resided, and her young pupils were, or seemed to be, perfectly happy under her care.

She had heard of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, and in terms that commanded respect and esteem; and a particular friend of her's had mentioned Mrs. Frampton not less advantageously in the hearing of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, which had induced her to fix on that lady's school for the education of Fanny.

In the letter delivered by Mrs. Jenny, Mrs. Fitzwilliam mentioned her young charge as an orphan with a small fortune, whom she had taken under her protection, and was desirous that she might have an useful rather than an elegant education.

To read, write, and work well, and to be perfected in grammar both French and English, with a thorough knowledge of geography, were the parts of education that were indispensable;—music, dancing, and drawing would require more application than could be spared from necessary avocations, and by no means requisite for her to be instructed in.

Such were the contents of Mrs. Fitzwilliam's letter, and the plan she laid down; by which Mrs. Frampton clearly perceived the little protegee was not designed to move in higher circles, or likely to have an independence.

Jenny's information, though she affected a cold unconcern to the woman, whose ill-nature

nature was not unobserved, had however given her no small pain and vexation.

Her school was highly respectable, and she took consequence to herself in having her pupils from the most distinguished families in the county.

To say truth, the most predominant foible in Mrs. Frampton's character, was *pride*, and a high consciousness of her own importance and abilities in the line she had chosen.

Not desirous, therefore, of having pupils whose contracted system of education could add nothing to her reputation or profit, she was a little out of humour with Mrs. Fitzwilliam's letter; and extremely hurt by the volunteer report of Jenny, though she affected a perfect indifference before the malicious servant.

Mrs. Frampton was not deficient in good-nature or humanity, but the consequence of her school was the first object of her consideration; and she was apprehensive

that if the story of Mrs. Jenny should by any means get promulgated among the young fashionables under her care, their mammas would most likely be offended by such an association.

One of the teachers, her chief confidant, was summoned to council, and the result was, a letter written to Mrs. Fitzwilliam,—“that Mrs. Frampton begged leave to observe, the mode of education she had pointed out for her protegee, would unquestionably have a very singular appearance to her companions, who all, without exception, had the benefit of masters in every branch which Mrs. Fitzwilliam deemed unnecessary for little Miss Thompson; and such an exemption from accomplishments might, and in all probability would, subject the child to the contempt of the school, and make her situation exceedingly unpleasant. If, therefore, Mrs. Fitzwilliam still retained the same objection to masters, Mrs. Frampton presumed to think,

think, her purpose would be better answered by the child being brought up as a half boarder; she would then be early taught to be useful, and being without pretensions, would escape unpleasant observations."

By this letter the governess hoped to exculpate herself from giving offence to the parents of her young pupils, should Fanny's story be reported, and leave the option entirely with Mrs. Fitzwilliam to withdraw the child, or adopt the plan she pointed out, as calculated solely for her comfort.

Mrs. Fitzwilliam received the letter in presence of her nieces, who perfectly accorded in the opinion of Mrs. Frampton, that as a half-boarder she would learn to be humble, useful, and qualified to get her bread hereafter. The young ladies having promptly delivered *their* sentiments, after a short consideration, Mrs. Fitzwilliam coincided with Mrs. Frampton's kind advice, and, "Fanny was left to her discretion and unlimited controul."

The governess was now at ease, justified to herself, and without having offended the lady who had recommended her house to Mrs. Fitzwilliam, she could exculpate herself from any possible reflections for receiving the little girl, since in fact a half-boarder is very little superior to a nursery or house-maid.

Fanny, unconscious of her situation, glad to escape from the scorn of the Misses Bruce, and the cold regards of her benefactress, which gave her continual pain and mortification, exerted all her little powers of pleasing, and sought to ingratiate herself into favour with her governess and her young companions.

But, alas! great is the force of prejudice! she soon felt all her advances to kindness repulsed, or disregarded; she saw the same haughtiness, the same contempt thrown into the looks of the misses in the school, as she had left at the abbey.

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The fact was, the confidential teacher had repeated to *her confidant* every syllable she had heard from the governess; and as every lady naturally has a friend to whom she is communicative, the invidious tale was very soon promulgated throughout the house, and passing through so many relaters, it lost nothing of its malignancy, nor of the disgraceful circumstances attached to the birth of poor Fanny.

The head teacher, Mrs. Malden, was proud, artful, and selfish, neither of which propensities could be gratified by the humble girl, who was the object of her disdain; for Fanny had from nature a proud susceptibility, that revolted against a mean, creeping desire of extracting notice by submissions, deception, or patience under ill-treatment: Her spirit was mixed with the diffidence becoming her age;—once repulsed with scorn, she shrank from a second trial, and in a very few weeks, she was dwindled into “that girl, Fanny, who
•was

was to be made useful, and fetch and carry for all the young ladies." In which service she was constantly employed, except in the afternoon school hours.

With all these mortifying degradations, the little despised girl acquired many advantages from her afternoon lessons. The youngest teacher, who was her instructress, had both good nature and humanity; she had sometimes *her* mortifications, and the lesson of forbearance to practice, and from thence was taught to pity an unoffending child, whose naturally docile and sweet disposition eagerly attended to, and profited by her instructions.

But the more her understanding was enlightened by the kindness of Miss Betterton, the more painfully she felt the general disregard of her companions. — Treated very little better than a servant, often reproved for trifling and involuntary omissions in the duties expected from her, her small services, her diligence, and wish
to

to please, passing unnoticed and unthanked, she would frequently weep when alone, and recal to her memory those happy days when she enjoyed the smiles of her benefactress, and the soothing kindness of Mrs. Bell.

In vain did the friendly Miss Betterson try to keep up her spirits, and promote a cheerfulness natural to youth, a melancholy apathy seemed insensibly to gain ground upon her mind; while a proud sense of unkind treatment made those duties she was obliged to perform a reluctant service, which she executed with an appearance of haughty indifference, that frequently gave much offence, and often subjected her to reprimands.

Once when on an occasion of this kind, Miss Betterson caught her bitterly weeping, she tenderly soothed, and reasoned with her on the folly of grieving at the impertinence and injustice of others, who degraded themselves by their unjustifiable conduct towards her.

“My

“My dear girl,” said she, “continue to behave with civility, and perform all that is expected from your situation. I need not caution you against being servile or deceptive, I see with pleasure you despise art and meanness; young as you are, there is a proper spirit in your manner, which I admire,—let it not grow into a sullen pride, neither permit the insolence and neglect of your companions to sour your temper and affect your spirits. Every thing you do, my dear Fanny, do it with cheerfulness, and disregard the ungraceful rudeness you meet with, as beneath your concern. Attend to your lessons, and I pronounce you will very shortly be infinitely their superior in knowledge, and deserve their envy (if they have not emulation) to a much greater degree than you now experience their contempt.”

Fanny kissed the hand of her kind instructress.—“I will endeavour to do every thing you desire me,” said she; “give
me

me double lessons if you please, I will not be idle."

From this time Fanny was stimulated by the praise and kindness of Miss Betterson to study and industry. The proud hope of excelling others glowed in her young bosom, and seemed to make amends for all the mortifications she endured,—and at length, though she did not cease to feel, she no longer appeared hurt or humbled; and by her indifference and forbearance, her malicious tormentors, robbed of their chief gratification in giving pain, grew weary of their useless exertions, and only treated her with a contemptuous neglect.


Fanny had been nearly twelve months at her school, in which period she had seen her benefactress only twice; and was now expecting to pass the Christmas vacation at the abbey, and looked forward with terror to the time when she was again to be insulted by the Miss Bruces, and perhaps as little regarded by Mrs. Fitzwilliam.

Miss

Miss Betterson, to whom she expressed all her fears, and movingly regretted the loss of that lady's former kindness, and the pain she should feel in leaving her dear Miss Betterson, very prudently recommended to her, never to lose sight of her great obligations to Mrs. Fitzwilliam, to whose humanity she was indebted for more than her existence,—in being rescued from misery, and placed in a situation by which she must gain advantages of the highest consequence to her future progress through the world.

“That gratitude, my dear girl,” said she, “which ought to be the leading feature in your character, will instruct you in your duty to that good lady; induce you to treat her nieces with respect, and by an unassuming propriety in your behaviour disarm their malice, and give peace to yourself.”

“Oh!” cried her young pupil, “you are a second Mrs. Bell!—So kind, so good
was



was she!—dear, dear Mrs. Bell, I have found you again!—Indeed, Miss Betterton, I will mind every word you say, and do every thing you advise; and who knows but Mrs. Fitzwilliam will find me improved, and look more kindly on me when I return.”

This delightful hope was a cordial that reconciled her to bear the hour of separation from her kind adviser, without shewing any part of the reluctance which predominated in her heart; for, in spite of all she had heard, and all she had promised, her fears were much stronger than her hopes.

When she arrived at the abbey the Miss Bruces were on a visit to a lady a few miles off; and Fanny was received by Mrs. Fitzwilliam with a tenderness natural to her heart when left to its own bias. So flattering, so unexpected was her kindness, that the poor agitated girl, unable to utter one word, sunk on her knees, and kissed her

her hand; while a flood of tears gushed from her eyes, and fell on the hand she held.

“My dear child, rise!” said Mrs. Fitzwilliam, much moved. “I rejoice to see you; you are surprisingly grown in this short time, and I hear with pleasure that you have been very diligent. Mrs. Frampton speaks very well of you; and you will always have a friend in me while I hear so good an account of your behaviour.”

Fanny was transported with a reception that realised her best hopes; and was in haste to display all her little acquirements, to justify the kind report of her governess, and deserve the regard of her generous benefactress.

In one week, during the absence of the young ladies, the happy girl had recovered her former place in the heart of Mrs. Fitzwilliam; she was constantly with her, and the good lady was not slow to discern the
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the traits of good sense, sweetness of temper, and the desire of improvement which seemed to be the principal wish of her heart.

One evening, when a violent head ache had caused her to dismiss Fanny to bed earlier than usual, she began to reflect on the situation of her poor protegee. The agent had failed, of Lieutenant Thompson she could hear no more than that he was in the East Indies, but whether alive or not was uncertain; and if he were still in existence, the chance of his being capable of providing for the child was equally doubtful.

Barton was gone to the West Indies on a three years station; he had only good wishes and a kind heart towards her. It was plain she had no mean capacity, and with the advantages of education, would unquestionably be enabled to support herself hereafter with a decent respectability.

"It is my duty then," said she, "to make a small provision for her, such as to preclude want, though not sufficient to encourage

encourage pride or independence from the exertion of her talents; and having taken upon myself to provide for my nieces, it becomes an indispensable duty not to delay making my will, lest my death should throw them wholly in the power of their imprudent parents. Yes, I will send for Mr. Farren to-morrow, to take instructions from my few memorandums for drawing it up in proper form."

Such was the wise and benevolent intention that closed Mrs. Fitzwilliam's soliloquy; but, alas! Heaven had otherwise disposed, and good designs too long delayed were rendered of no effect by a sudden paralytic affection, which seized her the following morning, at breakfast, as she was talking to the terrified Fanny, who saw her suddenly convulsed, and the next moment fall from her chair.

The poor girl's screams brought in the servants, she was taken to bed senseless; expresses were instantly dispatched to the
Miss

Miss Bruces, and a neighbouring physician. The latter arrived first,—the poor lady breathed but was speechless and inanimate on her left side; he saw but little to hope, though as yet he would not absolutely despair. Some stimulatives were poured down her throat, and every method tried to excite feeling in the deadened limbs.

The young ladies arrived, their grief was loud and clamorous; the servants were in tears and lamentations, but Fanny, the poor terrified and truly afflicted orphan; shed no tears, made no exclamations, she knelt at the foot of the bed the image of despair.

Dr. Douglas, long an acquaintance in the family, proposed sending off expresses to young Meredith and to Mr. and Mrs. Bruce; the young ladies could not object to the first, but requested he would delay the latter till some change appeared, as it would be cruel to terrify their mamma, and draw her into such an expensive journey, when possibly their dear aunt might be restored
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to them. The doctor, though without hope of any favourable change, acceded to their request, and a messenger was instantly sent for young Meredith, who could not arrive, with the utmost expedition, in less than four days. In the intermediate time, the doctor's house being three miles distance from the abbey, he proposed to remain with his patient, that he might attend to the slightest apparent alteration.

Not to dwell on this distressing scene, the poor lady lay three days in this deplorable struggle between life and death; when on the fourth morning a sudden and violent convulsion seized her, in which she breathed her last sigh, and her pure spirit fled to happier regions.

Loud and violent were the lamentations of the two nieces. Fanny neither spoke nor wept; horror for some minutes seemed to have deadened all her faculties, when the doctor turning to take her hand, she dropped senseless at his feet.

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It was some time before she recovered, and was then taken to bed without having strength to speak or oppose her removal from the chamber of death.

After a few hours had elapsed the doctor enquired of the young ladies, if they knew of any will being made; they not being at all acquainted with their late aunt's private concerns, could afford him no information, he therefore proposed sending for Mr. Farren, her attorney.

On his arrival, he said, he was very apprehensive there was no will executed.—“A few months ago,” added he, “when settling some business with Mrs. Fitzwilliam, she told me, she had occasionally been making a few memorandums relative to the disposal of her fortune. — “My landed estates,” said she, “will unquestionably be my nephew James's, the only son of my late brother; but having very considerable funded property, and some lately purchased copyhold estates, I am very desirous,

sirous, for many reasons, to make my will and bequeath my personal fortune to those I think most entitled to it.—Therefore, Mr. Farren, I shall send for you shortly, to take instructions from these memorandums, which when completed, will give me the satisfaction of knowing I have done my duty.”

“I believe,” added Mr. Farren, “it is near four months since this conversation passed, and from that hour it has never been renewed, or in the slightest way alluded to.”

The doctor expressed his concern at this information, at the same time observing, that Sir Robert Marsh, being guardian to young Meredith, under his father’s will, and fortunately at this time in the country, he thought it would be proper to send for him to be present in examining the papers, and sealing up the effects.

This arrangement was not perfectly agreeable to the young ladies, but they found it
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in vain to oppose what both gentlemen thought indispensibly necessary.

On the arrival of Sir Robert Marsh they proceeded to examine the cabinets and drawers; in one of the latter was found a paper, labelled on the back *Memorandums*, which on opening appeared to be in an unfinished state. The following were the contents:

“*Mem.* All my landed estates, independent of Malvern Abbey, which was settled on his father and his heirs, with ten thousand pounds from my funded property, to be my nephew Meredith’s; and my said nephew to be my residuary legatee, when all my debts and legacies are paid.—Ten thousand pounds to each of my two nieces, daughters of my sister Bruce, now resident with me.—Four hundred a year to my sister Bruce during her life, and if Mr. Bruce survives her, two hundred a year for his life.

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“ To Fanny Thompson, whom I have taken under my protection, I give forty-five pounds a year, for clothes and education, for seven years from the date of this my intended will. At the expiration of the said seven years, the further sum of three hundred pounds, to place her in some line that may enable her to procure her own subsistence; and if she behaves well, should a trifling sum more be wanted for that purpose, I recommend her to the generosity and humanity of my nephew Meredith, my legatee.

“ Lieutenant Thompson, of the *Vengeance* frigate, now, or lately in the East Indies, and Mr. Samuel Barton, a surgeon's mate in the navy, are the only two persons, to the best of my knowledge, who have any interest in the destiny of Fanny Thompson, or are acquainted with her concerns.

“ To all my servants a year's wages; over and above which I give to Ann Simpson and James Wilkins, who have resided
with

with me many years, the sum of twenty pounds a year for each of their lives.—And I request that Sir Robert Marsh, and Dr. Douglas of Languizany——”

Here most unfortunately the memorandums were broken off, and were without date or signature. The gentlemen were inexpressibly concerned, when after the most minute search, not the slightest document or memorandum could be found tending to give effect to the contents of this paper. There was little doubt but that it was the intention of Mrs. Fitzwilliam to have appointed the two last named gentlemen executors; but unhappily she had quitted her pen, by some extraordinary interruption, and had omitted, or was prevented by her sudden illness, from resuming it, as she certainly intended by her conversation with Mr. Farren.

In the quality of guardian to Meredith, who succeeded to the landed property, Sir Robert Marsh sealed up all the cabinets

and drawers; and after taking a copy of the memorandums properly attested, the original was restored to its place, and inventories were ordered to be taken of all the effects.

The young ladies, who were present at the reading, were at first much elated by their legacy of ten thousand pounds. But when a little cooled, and they reflected on the great property thrown into the hands of their cousin, with the bequests to poor Fanny, envy and rancour took possession of their bosoms; and forgetful of their aunt's generosity to them, such were their selfish regrets for the good extended to others, that they eagerly caught hold of the gentlemen's doubts, and heartily hoped the memorandums would be disputed by their mother.

So blind is envy to its true interest, that they never considered what they themselves might lose, in the possibility of their mother's coming into possession of the personals,

sonals, without any provision made for them; but wishing evil to others, considered only the gratification of their own malice against a poor unoffending orphan.

Young Meredith arrived even sooner than was expected. At this period he was nearly fourteen years of age, possessed of an excellent heart, a fund of good nature, and an understanding which would have done credit to one of a riper age. But his character so early formed, had two shades in it, which too generally creates more enemies than it gains friends, an impetuosity of disposition, a native pride that made him impatient of controul, and too frequently assumed the form of arrogance, when contradicted, or impeded in any of his chosen pursuits.

To those younger than himself, to those who were oppressed by others, and less liberally provided for, he was the kindest and most generous of friends; but to such whose rank in life was superior to his own,

and whose birth and fortune were presumed on as exacting claims to respect, which their own intrinsic worth had no pretensions to, to those he invariably assumed a loftiness of manner, an indifference and hauteur, which supported his own consequence, and repelled every attempt at presumption, or impertinence from his titled companion.

Meredith was warmly attached to his late aun., and very sincerely grieved at her death.—When introduced into the room where his cousins and Dr. Douglas were in conversation, his emotions were so very visible, that the young ladies thought it becoming in them to call up looks of sorrow, and display their handkerchiefs, though they could not force their tears at command.

After mutual condolences, Meredith asked for his little favourite, Fanny, and desired to see her;—she was accordingly sent for. When she made her appearance, there was no *assumption of grief* in her—the pale face, the sunken eyes, and the traces

traces of tears which had swelled her features, were unequivocal testimonies of heart-felt sorrow.

Meredith's sympathy was equally undisguised, he warmly embraced her, saying,—
"Take comfort, my dear Fanny, God has been pleased to take from you a good and generous protectress, but not the only one who loved you;—for her sake you shall be dear to me,—I will not desert you whenever you want a friend."

Tears were her only reply, as he seated her in a chair next to himself. Those base hearts in which envy and malice have fixed their stings, can alone be competent to judge of the pangs which swelled the bosoms of the Miss Bruces, at this tenderness and avowed friendship to the object of their hatred.—We hope none of our readers ever experienced similar sensations.

When Sir Robert Marsh was informed of Meredith's arrival, he lost no time in

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repairing



repairing to the abbey. In the intermediate space he had taken counsel's opinion relative to the memorandums, and was much concerned to be informed,—“That if opposed by any relatives entitled to share the personals, being without date or signature, there was no ground to support the legality of the bequests, under the circumstances in which they now stood.”

Sir Robert was not unacquainted with the character of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce; he knew there were no reasonable hopes to be entertained of their justice or generosity, and was extremely grieved, that such worthless persons had the power to assume an unlimited controul.

He had communicated his information in confidence to the Doctor. Mr. Farren had also given his decided opinion, that all must rest on the coincidence of the Bruces to the intention of the testator's memorandums, and from them nothing was expected.

They

They were therefore very cautious in their proceedings; but as the funeral could not be delayed, Sir Robert took upon him to order every thing in a handsome style, and an early day was appointed for the melancholy duty.



The Doctor took her hand, and led her to a chair, then bowing respectfully, he said,—“ You are arrived, Madam, to a melancholy family; and as our messenger could not have reached you, I am concerned it falls to my lot to inform you of a very grievous event.”

“ What!” exclaimed she, interrupting him, “ is my sister dead?”

The good man bowed in silence.

“ Bless me,” rejoined she, without even an appearance of concern, “ how strangely events combine to distress me, for within this fortnight I am become a widow.”

“ How!” said Miss Bruce, “ what, my dear mamma, is our papa dead?”

“ Yes, child, he is indeed dead. Not that you have much to lament, for he never cared sixpence for his children; and had he possessed millions, in the room of thousands, all would have been spent.— But more of this another time; pray inform

form me of the particulars of this recent event."

The Doctor seeing she looked earnestly on Meredith without speaking, took his hand, and leading him to her, said,—
"Perhaps, Madam, it may be some time since you saw this young gentleman, who is surprisingly grown in the last two years—your nephew, Mr. James Meredith."

The youth kissed her hand, saying, "I am glad to see you, my dear aunt."

"You are indeed wonderfully altered," returned she coldly; "but I am impatient for an account of my sister's death, and to know if she has left a will."

The Doctor very soon satisfied her in these particulars. When she heard the memorandums read, her face glowed with indignation and anger; but no sooner was she informed that *her concurrence* was necessary to give them effect, and that by agreeing to comply with her sister's wishes, every thing might be quietly and amicably settled,

settled, no sooner had she obtained this desirable information, than she sprang from her chair,—“How, Sir!” cried she, “can you suppose I will ever consent to alienate my own and my children’s rights—to have her funded property willed away, and be content with the paltry pittance of four hundred a year?”

“Consider, Madam, there is twenty thousand pounds between your daughters,” said the Doctor, interrupting her.

“And what is twenty thousand pounds from her immense fortune?—I tell you, Sir, *whoever you are*, that I will never consent to such an infamous partition of her property.”

“Sir Robert Marsh, Mr. Meredith’s guardian, is more competent to speak on this subject than I am,” returned the Doctor, coldly, “and he will be here to-morrow morning.”

“And may I be allowed, Sir, to enquire the name of the gentleman now before me?”

“Dear

"Dear aunt, I beg your pardon," cried Meredith, "this is Dr. Douglas, my late aunt's physician and friend."

The Doctor bowed, but with an air of indifference that spoke his little desire of cultivating the notice of Mrs. Bruce, with whom he was already thoroughly disgusted; and he very soon retired to his apartment, and left the ladies to themselves.

"Pray," said Mrs. Bruce, "is this Doctor a resident in the house?"

"Oh, no," replied Marianne, "he has only slept here since my aunt died, I suppose to watch that we did not break the seals." She then with much acrimony descanted on the Doctor's officiousness, as she termed it.

Young Meredith, who highly respected him, spoke as warmly in his praise.

"No doubt he is a mighty worthy man, for he is *your friend* I suppose."

The sneer which accompanied these words were so expressive of their meaning, that

that the youth was flushed with indignation; but suppressing his feelings, he replied with some energy,—“ Dr. Douglas I believe is the friend of every one who deserves his respect.” He then rose and wished them a good night.

To detail the conversation that passed is unnecessary. Mrs. Bruce briefly mentioned her husband's death, as occasioned by a cold, and a violent agitation of spirits, produced by losing all the money he possessed, and incurring a large debt, at the gaming table; from whence he had rushed into the street with his waistcoat unbuttoned, without a hat, and in a profuse perspiration.—The consequence was a fever on the brain, which carried him off in two days.

“ Without assuming a grief I did not feel,” said she, “ I disposed of my furniture directly, to raise money for my journey, and set off with all speed; though previously I had written to your aunt, and am surprised the letter has not been received.”

She

She then proceeded to assure them she would not give up a shilling; and though they would then be dependent on her, yet eventually they would have more than twice ten thousand pounds.

The ladies, however, now felt, that ten thousand pounds *independent of mamma*, would be far more desirable; and regretted that that part of the memorandums could not be established without the other bequests standing good.

They were silent a few moments, when she suddenly demanded what was become of that foundling girl they had so often mentioned in their letters; and who it seemed her ridiculous sister had intended such a provision for had she made a will. They satisfied her that she was in the house, but had retired to bed before her arrival.

" 'Tis mighty well," returned she, " I shall soon send her packing; unless that boy does any thing for her, she will have nothing of me. I have no notion of such vagabonds

vagabonds being so improperly encouraged, —let her go to her parish."

Poor Fanny!—Unconscious of the evils that threatened her, she was sleeping quietly in her little chamber, in the back front, and heard not of the arrival of Mrs. Bruce till the next morning; when Mrs. Simpson, who was no friend to that lady, told her she would find her in the breakfast-room. "And you must be very humble and respectful," said she, "for she is as proud as Lucifer, not a bit like our late good lady; I dare say she'll want to possess all,—you will have no good from her I assure you."

The poor girl trembled at this recital; and wanting courage to enter the breakfast-room, when she descended the stairs, was turning into the library. At the door she met Meredith coming from thence with the Doctor behind him, both looking uncommonly grave.—"Ah, Fanny," cried the former, taking her hand, "where are you going? don't you know breakfast is ready?"

"I,

"I, I believe I can't take any thing this morning," answered she in a broken voice.

He looked earnestly on her for a moment, then drawing her along, — "Yes, yes, you *must* eat; come, I will introduce you to my aunt Bruce."

She attempted to resist, but he held her hand firmly, and led her into the room, where the ladies sat with sullen dignity.

Meredith drew Fauny close to his aunt. "A young favourite of my late dear aunt's," said he, presenting her; "she has lost a good friend, but I hope in my worthy aunt Bruce, Fanny Thompson will find another protectress equally kind to her."

"I never engage for my friendship or protection, without knowing it to be deserved; when I know more of Fanny Thompson, I shall be better able to judge of her claims to my regards, than from the partiality of my young nephew, who can know but little of the human heart, and
lightly

lightly forms *his opinion* from the surface of things."

Meredith still held the poor girl's hand, who, affected by the tender mention of her late benefactress, and humbled by the repellent looks and words of Mrs. Bruce, burst into tears.

"Don't weep, my dear Fanny," cried the youth, with an indignant glance at the three females, "sit down and take your breakfast."

"Pray do, my good girl," said the kind doctor, "I have no doubt but your proper behaviour will obtain the regard of Mrs. Bruce, when she is better acquainted with you."

"The girl has a watery head, I believe. —You have no cause to cry, I think, when you have such partial friends."

Very little conversation passed at breakfast, and it was scarcely over before Sir Robert Marsh was announced. A long and very unpleasant conference took place
between

between Mrs. Bruce, the two gentlemen, and Meredith, who, by Sir Robert's desire, had accompanied them to the library.

In vain was every argument adduced by the baronet, to persuade Mrs. Bruce to a compliance with her late sister's intentions, by fulfilling the bequests; she positively refused her concurrence to any such arrangements, was determined to assert her rights to a moiety of the personal fortune, and as resolute not to give up a shilling to any such absurd legacies.

In vain did Meredith plead, or the gentlemen reason.—She was so decisive and so rude, that at length Sir Robert was provoked beyond all endurance.—“I cannot dispute your rights,” said he, “but I must arraign you of injustice and ingratitude.—You well know the late worthy Mrs. Fitzwilliam, ~~the~~ different periods, paid more than twelve thousand pounds for debts contracted by your extravagance, and has long maintained you. I blush to say a rude thing

thing to any female, but your whole conduct as a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother, has been most reproachful and improper, to say the least of it. You will now, I fear, wrong your daughters, for unhappily they will be in your power."

"Ah!" cried Meredith, interrupting him, "I will willingly resign the ten thousand given to me, and the remainder which may be left; if my dear aunt will but allow the payment of other legacies, I want nothing for myself."

"You are a child," returned she, disdainfully, "by admitting one part, I confirm the claims of all, which I shall not do, but use the privilege the law allows me."

"By so doing," rejoined Sir Robert, "you will indisputably be entitled to a moiety of the personals with my young charge, but I must tell you frankly, that in quality of his guardian, I shall be rigidly just, even to the minutest trifle, that he may have the power, as I am convinced he has

has the inclination, to fulfil every expressed wish of his late respectable aunt towards her little protegee, and her faithful servants; and as a preliminary in the discharge of my duty, permit me to remind you, Madam, that Malvern-Abbey is the absolute property of Mr. Meredith, consequently that *only his friends* can be welcome here."

While rage for a moment impeded speech from Mrs. Bruce, Meredith exclaimed,—
"Ah! dear Sir, Mrs. Bruce is no less my aunt than the dear lady I have lost;—surely my aunt, my cousins, are fully entitled to make my house their home."

"Yes," replied Sir Robert. "If they consider your interest, and wish to make that home pleasant to you and your friends, I should be the last man in the world to oppose your respect and consideration for your relatives; but allow me to say, that the conduct of Mrs. Bruce must decide and establish how far she is entitled to it. If she is inclined to settle things amicably and agreeably

agreeably to the tenor of the memorandums, this house is at her service till you become of age; if, on the contrary, she persists in her present avowed intention of claiming what the law will unquestionably assign to her, then I shall also persist in requesting her removal from hence with all speed, and inform her, that ~~here~~ she has no authority to act, or command a single domestic, nor shall I quit the house while she remains in it."

Meredith was silenced, but, how impossible to describe the scene that ensued, the rageful passion of Mrs. Bruce, which overcame every consideration of decency, of respect to herself, or her auditors;—she descended to the most violent abuse, and in the most vulgar terms. Meredith vainly exerted himself to calm the torrent of her invectives, she was outrageous, until Sir Robert's endurance was wholly overcome, and rising with a look of contempt he took Meredith's arm,

arm, and quitted the room without uttering a single word.

"I have done," said he, "with that shameless woman, my dear boy. Happily you can never want those sums of which you will be deprived by her selfishness, though doubtless pretty considerable; but you must have a moiety of the personals, and, I am persuaded, will most readily pay those legacies her avarice will set aside."

"Most assuredly, my dear Sir, I will enter into any engagement you please to dictate, that may empower you to fulfil the bequests of my late aunt to that dear little Fanny, and her faithful servants."

Being that moment joined by the doctor, who had remained a few minutes with Mrs. Bruce,—“I have exerted myself very fruitlessly,” said he, “to make that violent woman hear reason, but to contend with her avails nothing.—I therefore simply told her, you had taken possession of the abbey in the name of your ward, that she must there-

fore consider herself as *your guest* while she remained in it ; that the funeral would take place to-morrow, and that it became her in respect to her own reputation, to conduct herself with decency under these circumstances."

During the whole day Mrs. Bruce remained in her own apartment, and had a plate sent her from the dining table, declining to join them ; though she permitted her daughters to do so, more as spies than with any intention of shewing a civility to the party.

The young ladies, who had in a *tete-a-tete*, reflected on the present state of things, and combined the past and the future into one focus, saw but little reason to congratulate themselves on their mother's acquisitions, which eventually robbed them of the independence their late aunt had designed in their favour.

They were old enough, and had sufficient understanding to recollect the very little kindness

kindness or attention ever bestowed on them by their mother; whose extravagance and neglect of her family, had kept pace with the profuse dissipations of her husband.

They could recal no acts of maternal tenderness in earlier days, and now, after a separation of years, how cold and indifferent was her behaviour!—To judge of their future expectancies by her past conduct, held out but small hopes of her justice or generosity; and gladly would they now have concurred in establishing the memorandums into effect, even to the advantage of their cousin and the hated Fanny, so that *they* could be sharers of their ten thousand pounds independent of their mother's controul.

These reflections though they occasioned very painful feelings, and threw a correspondent cast of vexation over their features, had, however, tended to soften their voices, and greatly abated the haughty exterior which they had been accustomed to wear towards Fanny. There appeared an

air of melancholy which affected the sympathising heart of Meredith, as if they grieved at the misunderstanding between his guardian and Mrs. Bruce; he was, therefore, more tender and more respectful to them, from the credit he gave to the nature of their feelings.

Not so did Dr. Douglas appreciate them. In the few days he had passed at the abbey, he had seen so many instances of their selfishness, of their insolence and unkindness to the poor little orphan, that he estimated their present looks and behaviour to the right cause—to their disappointment and dependance on an unfeeling parent; consequently he was rather inclined to think them deservedly punished for their want of humanity, and the little sorrow or regret they had shewn for the death of their benefactress.

Fanny, the truly afflicted and humbled child of charity, eat nothing, though Meredith, with every mark of considerate tenderness,

derness, tempted her with the nicest bits on the table ; and both Sir Robert and the doctor encouraged her by the kindest attentions.

She tried to eat, and to express her gratitude, but it was an effort only ; she could not articulate her words audibly, and they saw her feelings were too powerful for utterance.

Mrs. Bruce kept her sullen state. The following morning saw the sacred remains of a most worthy woman consigned to the cold grave, though her virtues were indelibly impressed on the bosoms of all who knew her, except her ungrateful sister ; for even her nieces now felt their irreparable loss, in their selfish consideration of their own interest.

The morning succeeding this melancholy ceremony, Sir Robert and the doctor had a long conference with Mrs. Bruce, and every paper and document was examined relative to the fortune of the deceased. There appeared to be upwards of eighty thousand

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pounds

pounds in the funds, with several leasehold and copyhold estates she had purchased at the expence of near thirty thousand more.

Sir Robert then told her, it was the earnest request of his young ward that she would remain at the abbey until inventories of every valuable was taken for their mutual satisfaction, and a division, such as she had determined on, was entirely completed.

“ I will confess,” added he, “ that it was much his wish to offer you the abbey until he comes of age, but to that arrangement I cannot consent; for as you concede nothing in favour of others, and as he will pay every legacy, except what was intended for your daughters, who of course are now more amply provided for, it is my intention to let Malvern-Abbey for his advantage, and in this plan I follow the dictates of prudence, and my duty as a guardian of his property.”

“ Well, Sir, you must allow,” said she haughtily, “ that I have patiently attended
to

to your long harangue, with but little to thank *you* for on the score of politeness.— You will inform young Meredith that his aunt will not intrude in his house one day *after* our business is concluded;—till then, as there are many valuables in this house, a moiety of which belongs to me, I shall assuredly stay where I am, though possibly in your opinion on trespass.”

The gentlemen coldly bowed and withdrew, reporting their conversation to Meredith, who was extremely hurt, and immediately paid an abrupt visit to his aunt. He besought her, even with tears, to entertain a good opinion of his respect and love for her and his cousins—entreated that he might be allowed to cultivate *their affection*, and that, to the utmost of his power, he would study to deserve it—and indulged a hope that they might always live like one family closely united; while he sincerely lamented, that Sir Robert, tenacious in his duty as a guardian, was obliged to adopt measures

more painful to the heart of her nephew, than it could possibly be to her.

She heard him with a most determined coldness at first, but a sudden thought struck her just as his address terminated, and relaxing at once from the severity of her countenance, she gave him her hand, assured him of her regard, and that she properly discriminated between his guardian's inflexibility and the kind bias of her nephew's heart towards her and her girls.

"I ought, however," said she, "to allow for the tenaciousness of *your* guardian's conduct, since the same duty to my children compelled me to act as I have done; for however inclined to give up my own right, as a mother and guardian it was impossible for me to compliment away their's, or give up a trust so sacredly reposed in me, when deprived of their father. Therefore, my dear nephew, we must submit to be slaves to circumstances over which we have no controul. I forgive Sir Robert;

Robert; and on the same ground must be exonerated by you from every degree of blame, when only performing a maternal duty."

The generous, unsuspecting youth was forcibly impressed with the kindness of his aunt; he thought nothing could be opposed against a proceeding sanctified by such motives, when both equity and justice entitled his cousins to an equal share of the personals, however the partiality of his late dear aunt had intended to distinguish him. Under this conviction, he embraced and thanked her for her candour and integrity, with an assurance, that he should not be found ungrateful when he had the power to prove his sense of her goodness in this conversation.

While Mrs. Bruce exulted in the success of her delusive arts over the mind of her nephew, and anticipated future events to gratify her rapacious views, he, no less pleased, reported to his two friends the

candid and just motives which had governed his aunt to assert her right for the advantage of her children; than which nothing could be more legal and proper as the guardian of her daughters, whose claims both justice and affection demanded her exertions to establish. It was much his wish, therefore, that no further opposition, or reflections, should hurt her feelings, or estrange her affection from him.

Both Sir Robert and the doctor were well acquainted with the character of Mrs. Bruce; they could easily perceive she had some points to carry, some views of advantage to herself, by thus temporizing, and playing on the feelings of her young nephew. But they forbore to speak their sentiments, because, while he was under age she could not possibly injure him, and Sir Robert resolved to throw his fortune into Chancery, and only charge himself with his education.

“ But

"But," said the doctor, "will Mrs. Bruce's generosity and justice lead her to join with you in paying the legacies to the little protegee and servants of her late sister, as she deprives you of your's, and has the moiety of all the personals?"

"No, Sir," replied Meredith, colouring, "nor do I desire it. I understand my fortune is very considerable, and can well afford to gratify my wish of shewing the respect and gratitude I owe to my late aunt, by paying those trifling bequests to those she valued, and who loved her."

"You are a good and generous youth," rejoined the doctor, "but your guardians are not authorised to indulge your liberality; therefore you should reflect, that those annuities must be paid from your allowance, consequently you will suffer many deprivations, to save money sufficient to discharge the obligation you take upon yourself."

"Well,

“Well, Sir, I must be more frugal I suppose, and all I have to do, is to throw away no money idly; and perhaps be less kind to those who cannot want assistance; or at least have not such claims upon me as these good servants of my aunt’s. As to Fanny Thompson, she shall never know the want of a friend while James Meredith lives.—Like me, she is an orphan, but unlike me; she is poor and friendless; and it is my duty to provide for her to the utmost extent of her benefactress’s intentions.”

“My dear boy!” exclaimed Sir Robert, “your generous heart shall not be narrowed in points where humanity and justice govern its dictates—you *shall* be enabled to gratify your wishes; and when I give up the management of your fortune, I will take care the sums allowed for your use, shall admit of paying those annuities, without circumscribing your usual expenditure.”

Meredith gratefully thanked his guardian, and withdrew in search of Fanny, whose melancholy

melancholy situation affected him greatly; leaving the two gentlemen exceedingly delighted in observing such amiable traits of a good heart, a liberal mind, and an uncommon share of understanding, in a boy little more than fourteen years of age.

But however disposed they were to comply with his desire of being on civil terms with Mrs. Bruce, Sir Robert was determined to resist every overture tending to her residence in the abbey; and having a friend who had for some time been looking out for a handsome house in that part of the kingdom, he wrote without delay to offer his ward's estate to his consideration.

Meredith had found Fanny in a retired part of the garden; her eyes plainly told him the nature of her feelings. He took her hand, and in the kindest manner desired she would inform him, if she was well used at Mrs. Frampton's, or had any objection to return there.—“Be ingenuous, my dear Fanny, my good aunt has left a handsome

handsome sum for your education, you will not be obliged to return to your former school if unpleasant to you; another situation will be easily met with, therefore 'tis entirely left to your choice to reside with Mrs. Frampton or not. Dr. Douglas will be your guardian when I return to Eton."

A burst of tears fell from her eyes.—
"Oh, how kind you are!" said she, "no one cares for me here but you and the doctor!—To tell the truth I did not like Mrs. Frampton's school at first, she is very good and kind herself, but very seldom in the public school room. The head teacher is proud and ill tempered, but the other, my dear Miss Betterson, is as good as a mother to me; and though the young ladies are all proud, and don't notice me, because—because I am a poor orphan, and because, they say, I had a naughty mother, yet I do so love Miss Betterson, that I would rather go to her than among strangers,—for now you know, I have no friend

friend or benefactress to go to, no one to care for me."

Again her tears streamed, while the plaintive tones of her voice sunk into the soul of Meredith; and he felt the warm drops roll down his cheeks, as he pressed her hand, and assured her she would find in Dr. Douglas and himself two friends who would never forsake her, — and that he would take care she should appear in such a light at school, that none of the young misses should dare to insult her.

The poor girl so sensibly felt this kindness, that she kissed his hand, and ran from him speechless, and almost frantic between joy and sorrow.—Her emotions could not be expressed by words; nor was Meredith less moved by the dumb, but eloquent expression which agitated her whole frame.

Not longer to dwell on the several incidents of little consequence to this history, we shall briefly say, that on a division of property, Meredith found himself entitled
to

to more than fifty thousand pounds, independent of his paternal fortune, and the estate of Malvern Abbey. Far from regretting he had lost so large a sum as would have reverted to him after payment of the legacies, had the memorandums been carried into effect, he was rejoiced his aunt and cousins were so well provided for independent of him.

But what can satisfy a rapacious mind?— Fifty thousand pounds was a sum so infinitely beyond what Mrs. Broce could ever have hoped for, knowing in fact how little she deserved on the score of merit, or affection to her family, that she certainly ought to have been highly contented with it; but the superior fortune of her nephew was a sting to her heart, that not only lessened the value of what she possessed, and filled her bosom with hatred and envy, but gave rise to every bad passion to contrive plans that should eventually aggrandise herself at his expence.

Thus

Thus when she took an affectionate leave of him,—when she told him that it was her intention to reside in London, and from its comparative vicinity to Eton, would, she flattered herself, facilitate their frequent interviews, as her house would at all times be his home—when she recommended his cousins to his kind remembrance, who so *dearly loved him*,—when she uttered all these seeming kindnesses, she detested him in her heart, and had no other view than to make him subservient to her own deep-laid selfish schemes.

Sir Robert Marsh was not inattentive, and gave her all the credit for sincerity that she deserved, for he understood her character well.

Her affectionate leave-taking did not extend towards poor Fanny; neither did the young ladies shew the least degree of interest or regard for her, they coldly bade her good bye, and wished her well.

When

When the carriage drove from the gates, the poor little orphan deeply sighed, saying,—"Oh, how happy are the Miss Bruces, they have a mamma with them!"

"True, my good girl," said Sir Robert, who had heard her involuntary exclamation, "but 'tis very possible, they may have to boast of no advantages over you from that circumstance; believe me, my dear, they have exchanged the care of a real mother for a mere nominal one. Mrs. Fitzwilliam was more than a mother to them, and Mrs. Bruce is much less; she will have the name, but without feeling maternal tenderness, or regarding her children's interest,—they are objects for pity, not of envy, or I am very much mistaken."

Fanny blushed at this gentle rebuke, but made no reply. Dr. Douglas soon after joined her.—"I hear, my dear girl, that you are willing to return to your school; I am glad of it, it proves that you are not capricious, or childishly fond of change.

It

It is settled between Meredith and his guardian, that your schooling shall be regularly paid for, and every attention shewn to you as in the life time of Mrs. Fitzwilliam. You will have handsome clothes, a liberal allowance for pocket money; and if Miss Betterson continues her kind regards to you, your friends will not be ungrateful to her. My dear child, Meredith will consider you as a sister, if you continue to behave well, and apply diligently to your studies; and if at any time you have cause to complain, which I hope you will never do without a regard to truth and justice, rest assured of friends to protect you.—Young as you are, there is a sensibility, and a seeming steadiness in your disposition, that encourages me to talk to you thus freely;—be good, my dear Fanny, and you will be happy in yourself, whatever treatment you may meet with from others.

A burst of grateful tears stopped the old gentleman's admonitions;—well as she could

could speak she promised "to be good and grateful as long as she lived."

In a very few days after this conversation, Sir Robert Marsh and Meredith considerably took Fanny to school; their presence giving a consequence to their little protegee, which they rightly judged would be of infinite service to her.

She was received by Mrs. Frampton and her friend Miss Betterson with a very flattering degree of kindness; the former gratified that the little nobody had friends that justified her among her great connexions for admitting her—the latter felt what she professed, real compassion and regard.

Here then we leave our young heroine, if not happy yet considerably relieved from that oppressive sorrow which had overwhelmed her for some time past.

Meredith shortly returned to Eton, his guardian let the abbey to his friend, and placed his charge in the court of chancery; reserving a handsome yearly income for his support,

support, and to answer the engagements he had entered into to provide for Fanny, and the late servants of his good aunt, agreeably to the tenor of her memorandums.

We must now look back to the destiny of our old favourite Thompson, whom we left ready to take possession of the *Britannia*, a country ship; whose heart throbbed with gratitude to his employer, and with thankful exultation to Heaven for his unlooked for good fortune.



CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXI.

“How base must be that soul who can delight in giving pain to others! But to accelerate the happiness of a human being but for one moment, or speak peace to a mind oppressed with sorrow or disappointment, is a transport unspeakable to a feeling heart.”

WHILE Thompson was improving daily in the knowledge required to fit him for the duties of his situation, he made no small progress in the esteem of Mr. Selwyn, his benefactor. A character so unadulterated, so frank and ingenuous could not fail of being fully appreciated by a man of understanding, and a good heart; in fact, he conceived

ceived himself peculiarly fortunate in his choice of a commander for his ship, and in being the instrument chosen by Providence to preserve a worthy and ill-treated young man from being thrown on the world, among strangers, and at such a distance from his native land.

Thus mutually disposed to esteem each other, the days passed on rapidly and pleasantly to both ; the Britannia was nearly ready for sea, and her commander thought he was pretty well acquainted with every necessary point of duty to do credit to himself and justice to his employer.

One day, going through a street which led to Mr. Selwyn's warehouses, he was met by his *ci-devant* captain; he slightly moved his hat, the captain stopped him,—“ Mr. Thompson, I hear you are going to command a country ship, is my information correct ?”

“ It is, Sir,” replied he, “ I am engaged in the service of Mr. Selwyn.”

“ Indeed !

"Indeed! and are you aware of the consequence?—Do you know that your half-pay will be recalled if you engage in this line without permission from the Admiralty board?"

"No, Sir, I was not acquainted with that circumstance."

"Then, Sir, I think it right to inform you that it is your duty to return without any delay to England, and attend the board's pleasure; as it becomes a part of my duty to send home the minutes of the court martial, and the sentence of the court which dismisses you from my ship."

"Sir, it is not in my power to return under my present engagements."

"Then, Sir, you will be struck off the list most probably; to a certainty lose your half-pay from the time you thought proper to make an engagement contrary to the rules of the naval service."

Thompson was about to reply, but the captain quitted him abruptly. He was greatly

greatly disconcerted, having lately written to his agent to desire he would answer whatever bills should be drawn upon him by Mr. Samuel Barton, to the amount of his half-pay.—He had also written to Barton, relating his unjust dismissal from the Vengeance, his subsequent good fortune, and an order for him to receive the whole of his half pay, if wanted, for the use of his little Fanny; who was to be placed at school, and taken care of, the same as if she was truly his own child.

The loss of his half pay was a stroke he was wholly unprepared for. To be struck off the list, was a disgrace to his character as an officer and a man of honour.—What was he to do?—He had no hesitation in believing, that the same malice which had so lately oppressed him, would pursue him with unrelenting severity.—He had no friends at the board, no interest with ministry or parliament men; a simple individual, without fortune, without friends,

and with a cruel stigma hanging on his character.—What had he to oppose against the sentence of a court-martial, and the prejudiced report of his former commander?

Under these painful reflections, he sought Mr. Selwyn, and related the preceding conversation with his *ci-devant* captain. Mr. Selwyn saw at once into the persevering malice that would crush poor Thompson to the extent of its power.—

“My good fellow,” said he, “you have no family connexions in England to regret, you are in truth a citizen of the world;—what then should prevent you from henceforth becoming a contented resident in India?—I promise you, while I remain here, a situation far more lucrative than your native country can offer you, were you even promoted to a command.—The half-pay is a mere trifle, can be of no object to you when put in competition with the advantages I have the pleasure to offer to you.”

“Ah!

"Ah! my dear, my only friend!" cried Thompson, "God is my witness, that your kindness will live in my heart for ever!—Yes, to shed my last drop of blood to prove my gratitude, if it would serve you, would be my pride as well as my duty;—for why?—you have been, as I may say, the good Samaritan, to heal the wounded mind of a poor stranger, to give bread and wine ——"

"No more, no more of that," cried Selwyn, interrupting him, "I shall be abundantly overpaid in the friendship of a worthy man;—you owe me nothing on the score of gratitude but what you have the power to return by your good will,—yet I will not urge you to remain with me, if you feel reluctant."

"Reluctant!" exclaimed Thompson, tears running down his cheeks:—"O! if my life could with honour be passed in your service, never, never would I forsake you.—But to be struck off the list like a scoundrel!

drel! I cannot bear that,—no, I cannot bear that, though I wanted a morsel of bread!”

“Hear me,” said Mr. Selwyn, “I have some friends in England, among whom is an old and worthy admiral, lately at the board; if he lives and retains his situation, I am persuaded my account of this business will influence him in your behalf—for I shall refer him to the officers and seamen of the Vengeance, to corroborate my statement. Mean time do you instantly write to the board a plain unvarnished narrative of facts, express the deep sense you have of your unmerited disgrace, the distress which your dismissal had involved you in, and which, by its consequences had compelled you to accept the command of a country ship for the present, to afford you the means of support,—but that you would be always ready to obey Admiralty orders, and serve your king and country in whatever way their lordships should please to command you.”

“I

"I fear," answered Thompson, "I shall make but sorry work in writing such a letter; a man cannot well speak for himself, and I never wrote a letter to the Admiralty board in my life."

"Well," returned Mr. Selwyn, "I will write then, and you shall copy; a true state of your case will speak for itself, and to me leave the relation of those circumstances which do you so much credit. But, my friend, whatever may be the event, even if you lose your commission, I will, this day, make such an arrangement as shall effectually preserve you from feeling pecuniary difficulties from that circumstance.—I have taken you up, I know *my duty*, and I am sure you will never shrink from *your's*;—therefore, make your mind easy, and trust that you have a friend who will not forsake you."

The grateful heart of Thompson swelled with emotions that could not find utterance,

he wrung the hand of his generous benefactor, and darted out of the room.

The silent pressure was appreciated with more feeling than the most eloquent expressions of loud-toned gratitude could have raised, for Selwyn knew the human heart well, real gratitude and sincerity doth not vaunt itself in words.

An overland dispatch was going for England in a few days, the good man found means to send off his letters by that conveyance, and trusted the contents and the interest of his friends, would counteract the malicious designs of Thompson's enemies. Not that he was at all anxious whether he might forfeit his commission or not, any further than the gratifications of the poor lieutenant's pride and sense of honour.

Shortly after this business was settled, the Britannia sailed for the Prince of Wales's island.—Never did any commander exert his abilities more to serve his employer, and keep good order in his ship than Captain Thompson;

Thompson; he gained the respect and affection both of the officers and men under him.—What leisure time he had he devoted to reading and useful knowledge, and thus daily grew wiser, more polished, and better informed, without vitiating his principles by a commerce with the gay world.

He had returned from a second voyage when his constant friend, Selwyn, presented him with letters he had received from the board of Admiralty, signifying,—“that as peace had been established, his services were not immediately wanted, and his half-pay would be continued until he was called upon for duty at home.”

Not a word was said on the subject of his court-martial, which vexed Mr. Selwyn not a little, for he hoped to have had the sentence reversed; he knew not how tenacious the board are of clipping the power of a commander, and the advantages a captain and his party have over a subaltern officer. It was sufficient to pass it by, and continue

his half-pay, with an intimation he might at some future time be called on duty; and this intimation a little reconciled Thompson to bear an injury and a disgrace, the sense of which he could never dismiss from his mind.

But this was not the only source of regret he sometimes felt in being so far from his native country;—he received no letters from Barton, or from Lascelles,—his friends had forgotten him,—what was become of poor Fanny?—How cruel to trifle with his feelings, and leave him to painful conjectures! Sometimes he thought Barton was dead, and had the most melancholy forebodings that the unfortunate Lascelles, disappointed in every hope, might have sunk under his afflictions. All the kindness, the brotherly affection of Selwyn could not divert the mind of Thompson from dwelling on his two friends, and his little protegee.—He communicated the sad memoirs of the poor Convict, to his benefactor, who was not less interested

interested for the little orphan than her first friend; and this affecting story rivetted more strongly his esteem and affection for Thompson.

He offered immediately to write and engage a friend of his, in London, to enquire after three persons so dear to him; and to supply their wants and promote their interests, should they stand in need of it.—Thompson gratefully accepted this offer, and also wrote again to his agent, now being assured of his half-pay, to reserve it for the use of Fanny.

Another year had nearly expired, and Thompson was daily expected from his fifth trading voyage, when Mr. Selwyn was inexpressibly shocked by intelligence that the *Britannia* had been wrecked on the Malabar coast, and it was feared Captain Thompson and his people all perished, or had been carried off prisoners by the native Indians.—Two sailors, thrown on a piece of the wreck, had been

driven out to sea, and providentially taken up by a whaler, after being tossed about a day and a night, and on the eve of perishing.

While in this dreadful situation, they beheld a party of Indians coming over the hills towards the coast; but whether the unfortunate sufferers had perished in the sea, or were fallen into their hands they could give no information.

'Tis impossible to paint the deep affliction of Mr. Selwyn.—Thompson was little less dear to him than if he had been his own son; the poor fellow had acquired a tolerable competency, and had also so entwined himself about the heart of his benefactor, that he proposed this voyage should have been the last—and henceforth Thompson was to become an inmate of his house, and a son and companion of Mrs. Selwyn and himself.

“We have enough of worldly wealth,” said he to his lady, “we have no children, let us be content to adopt this young man,
and

and return next spring to England; without seeking to encrease our fortune beyond a comfortable mediocrity, enough for ourselves and for those we love."

"I coincide most willingly in your design," returned Mrs. Selwyn, "we have enough for our time of life; we have no near relatives, and I really love young Thompson with maternal affection. Yes, let us go to England, and rest in our native country, then possibly the affectionate worthy young man may recover the friends and protegee he has lost."

Thus similar in their wishes, and in their regard for Thompson, they anticipated the transport he would feel on his return, when they should communicate such little expected delightful intelligence. Alas! what a cruel reverse to their benevolent intentions; how bitterly did they regret not having adopted the present plan the preceding year.—"Poor, poor Thompson!" exclaimed Mrs. Selwyn.—"Good young man!

man!—My God, how dreadful to feel that even a certainty of his death would be a comparative degree of ease to what tortures my heart, from the dread of his being in the hands of the savages, subject to their horrid cruelties!"

Mr. Selwyn could not relieve his heartfelt sorrow by words, or by tears, grief pressed heavily upon his bosom; till this dreadful event, he knew not how very dear an interest the unfortunate young man held in his affections. He reproached himself incessantly of avarice, his protracted good intentions had for ever robbed him of happiness,—why had he waited for another voyage, when he wanted not its advantages? Ah! had he then, when Thompson opened his heart to him, when sorrowing under the apprehension of having lost his friends and his little protegee, had he then cheered him with the prospect of returning to England in a year or two, and relinquished this last voyage to wind up his affairs;—
“then,”

“then,” cried he, clasping his hands in agony, “then all would have been well!—But to gratify avarice, I pushed on this unlucky voyage, and reserved to myself the pleasure of seeing his transport when informed so unexpectedly of our intended return to our native country!”

Never was a dearly beloved son more tenderly regretted.—The sad event seemed to have annihilated every desire to quit India, at least for some time; for though they could not justly indulge the most distant expectation of Thompson’s escape from a premature death, yet it was long before Mr. Selwyn could be persuaded to resign the idea that what was possible through the intervention of Providence, might also be probable—and as the heart is ever ready to credit the accomplishment of its wishes, he long balanced possibilities against an almost certain conviction of the fallacy of hope; until time robbed him of the visionary indulgence, and every enquiry and every exertion

ertion to obtain intelligence ended in bitter disappointment.

In the intermediate time Mr. Selwyn had written to his correspondents in London, to find out, if possible, the two friends of Thompson, Barton and Lascelles, also the little girl;—the latter Mrs. Selwyn determined to adopt, if alive, as a mark of her regard for her protector, and orders were given, to furnish her with every requisite fit for her intended situation, and place her in a respectable school till they should either return to England or send for her to India.

This generous adoption, sacred to the affection they bore to their lost friend, gave them a satisfaction that greatly tended to abate their heartfelt grief. The unfortunate little girl was ever to retain the name of Thompson, and if it were permitted for those in Heaven to look down on those they loved in this life, how would the spirit of the benevolent Thompson be gratified by
their

their tender care of his little protegee; and no less would its erring unhappy mother exult in the protection given to her innocent orphan.

Such were the heart-soothing consolations this inestimable couple drew to themselves by their intended benevolence,—and to that supreme felicity, which “goodness bosoms even,” we shall leave them; and while sincerely regretting the unfortunate destiny of our worthy lieutenant, return to England, and to those most valued by him in the short time he had known how to estimate their friendly attentions.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXII.

“One of the most sublime pleasures we can feel, must be to meet with a being whom our judgment and affection can select as worthy of our esteem; one to whom our heart clings with a well-grounded hope of obtaining a tender and cherished companion through the vicissitudes of life.”

WHEN we took leave of Lieutenant Lascelles, we left him restored to his family, to independence, and happiness, by the unbounded generosity of his brother.—But he had a heart too feeling and too friendly to be narrowed into selfish enjoyments, or to be forgetful of a man to whose affectionate

tionate attentions he was indebted for recovered peace of mind, and whose liberal hand and benevolent heart would have shared with him to his last guinea.

Lascelles had not failed in writing to his friend, and conveying to him the generous offer of his brother, and his own hearty desire to embrace him as an inmate in the family.—Nor was he less assiduous in making every enquiry, through the medium of his correspondents, to trace out the Bartons, and obtain information of Thompson's little protegee.

But to the several letters he wrote to India, he received no answers, and every endeavour to procure intelligence of the Bartons and Fanny, was attended with constant disappointment. Still he looked forward weeks and months in the hope of hearing from his friend, and anxiously expected the return of the Vengeance, when he knew the time of her station expired, and ships were gone out to relieve the fleet.

At

At length he read in the papers of her arrival off Portsmouth, and without delay he hastened thither with a beating heart, exulting in the hope of meeting his friend; at least a certainty of having an end put to the cruel suspense and painful incertitude which had embittered his otherwise peaceful days in the bosom of his family.

How impossible is it for our feeble pen to describe the astonishment, the anguish, and disappointment of the worthy Lascelles, when he came a long side of the ship, where his impatience had carried him, to hear that his much valued friend had been dismissed from the Vengeance, and was left in India. This information was given by the first lieutenant, with all the acrimony and aggravations the story would admit of; with an assurance also that he had refused to return to England, and of course would be struck off the list.

Overcome beyond the power of making further enquiries, Lascelles jumped into the boat,

boat, and arrived on shore petrified with equal grief and surprise.—“Disobedience, neglect of duty, and drunkenness! — Impossible!” cried he, mentally, “the testimony of the whole world shall never make me give credit to such infamous charges. But I will hasten to the Admiralty and know the truth.”

With a mind greatly disturbed, and a countenance that spoke the perturbation of his heart, he stepped out of the boat close to two ladies and a gentleman. He would have passed without looking on either, but was stopped by the address of the latter,—“I beg your pardon, I am told here, that your boat came from the Vengeance frigate, this day come up the harbour from the East-Indies.”

“Yes, Sir, yes,” cried Lascelles, staring at him with indescribable agitation, “Yes, *I have been on board that cursed ship.*”

“I am afraid, Sir, I have revived some disagreeable recollections; but excuse me if

I take the liberty to ask if Lieutenant Thompson is on board the frigate?"

"Thompson, Lieutenant Thompson!" repeated Lascelles, "my God!—Do you know my poor friend?"—and instantly the most tender emotions overpowered him, and he burst into tears.

"Ah!" exclaimed a sweet voice, "the worthy creature is surely dead!"

Lascelles hastily wiped off his tears, looked up, and saw, as he thought, an angel; whose lovely face was overspread with a visible concern that penetrated to his heart.—"Who are you," said he "that appear to sympathize with me?—Angelical woman, you have a heart, I see!"

The gentleman, more collected, observed a tavern, and requested Lascelles to accompany them into the house; which invitation he accepted by following the ladies, but was unable to speak another word until some wine being called for, he recovered from

from the shock which had almost deprived him of his senses.

He then, though in a guarded manner, detailed the baneful information given to him on board.—As he was speaking, the elder lady cried aloud,—“No, I cannot believe it!—If possible there can be truth in this report, then I renounce all pretensions to judgment and the impulses of my heart for ever!—But no, such benevolence, such candour, such traits of a noble heart, could never be guilty of such errors!—Excuse me, Sir, does he live—where is he? Thus disgraced and poor he will find friends who will not condemn him unheard.”

Lascelles sprang from his seat, and suddenly kissed her hand.—“Bless you!—Bless you!” said he, “you know the man, so do I.—Never, never was he guilty of neglect of duty or drunkenness.—I well know those who have thus disgraced him, and I will also know the whole affair before to-morrow night.—I go directly to London.”

The

The ladies, a little recovered from the indignation and sorrow that at first caused such painful emotions, asked some questions of Lascelles, which led him to mention his own situation on board the *Vengeance*; and in speaking of Thompson's kindness to himself, he slightly touched on his own story, his return to England, his disappointment relative to the commissions entrusted to him, and the anxiety he had long endured from the unaccountable silence of his friend.

"I find, Sir," observed the elder lady, whom our readers, perhaps, have already recognised as Mrs. Percy, "that you can give us many interesting particulars of this young man. Our acquaintance was very transient, but it commenced under circumstances that threw all ceremony at a distance, and gave me, as I thought, an insight into his heart, which established him with me as a worthy man and an old friend. I am very desirous to hear more of him,

him, my house is a short distance from hence; and if you will return and pass the day with us, we shall be highly gratified; and you may, if you please, have a companion in your journey to-morrow, in this gentleman, who is going to London for a few days."

Lascelles, agreeably surprised by this frank and polite invitation, gratefully accepted it, and was soon seated in their carriage.

Mrs. Percy then informed him, that hearing the preceding day the Vengeance was arrived in the harbour, and coming into town on a little business, she had made a point of enquiring after Thompson, in the hope of his return, and of becoming better acquainted with him;—"For really," said she, "I was unaccountably prepossessed in his favour, and never in my life was so well pleased with any man on so short an acquaintance."

She

She then related his humanity and kindness to the poor invalid in the coach, the frankness of his manners, and his unreserved communication relative to himself and his family.—“So dissimilar,” added she, “was every trait of his character to the general run of such as had fallen under our observation, that he has never faded from our memory; and Clara here, (looking at her lovely daughter) has from that hour been disgusted with the fashionable manners of our common acquaintance,—for she says, they have bodies without souls, and heads without hearts,—the rough young sailor was worth a thousand of such selfish frivolous beings.”

“My dear mamma,” cried the blushing Clara, “pray don’t thus expose my deplorable want of taste. This gentleman will be led to conclude that I have been overlooked by the gay world, and that disappointed hopes have given me the spleen; and

and like the fox, that I rail at the good which is beyond my reach."

She was interrupted by a very dashing gentleman riding up and stopping the carriage. He poured forth a volley of compliments, mixed with terrible regrets, that she had failed to illumine the last assembly with her presence; *every one* had felt a disappointment, but *he had been miserable*, and should have flown at break of day to investigate the cause of her cruel absence, had he not been ordered on guard.—He was then just come from her house.

Clara interrupted him,—“ You are exceedingly polite, Captain Abercorn, and I give due credit to all your sufferings on so momentous an occasion, as indeed you look very pale and woe-begone. At the next assembly perhaps I may redeem my credit, and restore you to health and peace of mind; till then adieu, take great care of yourself, I pray.” She then ordered the carriage to drive on, and indulged herself in a hearty laugh.

“ Only this foolish coxcomb,” said she, “ could have excited a smile on my face, for really I have concern at heart for poor Thompson, in spite of your report, my dear Madam, of my folly and want of taste.”

Lascelles, who had scarcely looked at, or bestowed a thought on any woman since the death of his lamented wife, was exceedingly struck with the person and easy unaffected manners of the lovely Clara; nor did he less admire her amiable mother. The interest they took in the destiny of his unfortunate friend, gave him the highest opinion of their humanity and philanthropy. Every moment encreased his respect and esteem for beings so unlike the generality of females; and for the first time since the most melancholy period of his life, he thought it possible there might still exist one or two estimable women in the world, and that the man who was blessed with such a companion as Clara, must be a happy and an enviable being.

When

When they arrived at Mrs. Percy's house, she entreated Lascelles to give them a history of Thompson's protegee, to which he had alluded; and to the best of his recollection, he detailed the story of the late unhappy convict, and the chance circumstance which had given her little orphan into the arms of Thompson, with every particular of his conduct and sentiments which had fallen under his observation. He concluded his long account with expressions of the warmest regard for him, and a confident belief that he had been cruelly and unjustly dealt by; and was assuredly a victim to prejudice, and the despotic authority of a young ill-judging commander.

The ladies shed tears at the melancholy story of the poor convict, and felt real concern for the little orphan, whose unprotected and uncertain fate it was painful to think of. They offered their assistance towards enquiries, and proposed an advertisement describing the Bartons and the

child, which plan Lascelles resolved to adopt. He then said, that if he could learn any thing of his friend at the Admiralty, it was his intention to invite his return to England, and to share that fortune with him his generous brother had bestowed,—“For well do I know,” said he, “that had he possessed thousands, or but one solitary guinea, I, and mine, might have shared in either to the last shilling.”

Both Mrs. Percy and her daughter were charmed with sentiments of such friendship, liberality, and gratitude, as were rarely to be found among men of the world, though sometimes faintly portrayed in novels and ancient story. Clara’s heart whispered,—“Surely Thompson and this Lascelles have similar minds; and if the former was the genuine son of nature, the latter has additional merit, in preserving his principles and his heart uncorrupt in a commerce with the dissipated world.”

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In short, this sudden acquaintance laid the foundation of a lasting attachment in both parties. Hearts in unison with each other, fly out unconsciously to greet a kindred spirit, and a few hours conversation taught Clara and Lascelles the same sentiment of esteem and admiration, which was never erased from their bosoms.

The following morning beheld a mutual regret at the unavoidable separation; Lascelles, however, gathered courage to ask permission to wait on them on his return from town, which was readily granted.— The gentleman who accompanied him was an attorney, and related to the late Mr. Percy, a sensible intelligent man, who pleased with his companion, requested he would take up his quarters at his house in Bedford Square; an offer made without reserve or ostentation, was accepted with frankness and gratitude. They parted on coming to town, and Lascelles hastened to the Admiralty.

There he obtained the confirmation of an event he was so unwilling to believe; but the severity of the stroke was softened, when he learnt that an admiral at the board was disposed in his favour—that he was on the half-pay list, and permitted to remain in India during peace, or until recalled by an Admiralty order.

He learnt also Thompson's connexion with Mr. Selwyn, and no longer dreading that he had pecuniary difficulties, and the want of a friend, to contend with, so far from his native home, his heart felt considerably lightened of its worst fears; and now that he knew through what channel to direct his letters, finding a fleet of Indiamen was preparing for sea, he went to a coffee-house, and there wrote all that he felt at his unkind silence,—and while he congratulated him on the friendship of Mr. Selwyn, he earnestly besought him to return to England without delay, and share the
the

the fortune Providence and his good brother had bestowed upon him.

We shall not enter into a detail of particulars in this long letter, 'tis sufficient to say that it was dictated by a warm and friendly heart.

We have perhaps already tired our readers by relating this meeting at Portsmouth, therefore shall briefly add, that Lascelles pursued his enquiry after the Bartons, after Fanny, and the agent of Thompson, alike without success; and as a last hope, he caused an advertisement to be inserted in the papers on the day he left town.

He took leave of his host, and speeded back to Portsmouth. Great was the satisfaction Mrs. Percy and her family experienced by his report of Thompson's situation; not that his injuries, or his disgrace were done away, but subsequent circumstances in his favour lessened their concern, and strengthened their hopes of his being

one day restored with honour to his country and friends.

Lascelles, who had by his friendship made himself an interest in the heart of Mrs. Percy, was invited to pass a few days with them, and without hesitation stopped a week; and such good use did he make of his domesticated situation, that when he felt he ought not longer to intrude upon their hospitality, and was compelled to announce his intended departure the following day, he raised his eyes to the lovely Clara, and beheld her head cast down, and the roses fled from her cheeks.

Mrs. Percy said, he was unquestionably the best judge of his engagements and claims upon his presence;—"But if consistent," added she, "with those claims, you can pass a few days more here; I think it will be unnecessary to assure you, that your company will give us very sincere pleasure. My sons and their tutor are delighted with you—I believe Clara will not be

be displeased if you give us another week—and for myself, I have very ill shewn my opinion of your character, if you do not give me credit for a hearty welcome.”

“ Ah, Madam!” cried Lascelles, with an animation that spoke his lively sense of her kindness, “ how very easily are we persuaded to follow the secret impulses of the heart; I only dreaded being an intruder, conscious that I had no pretensions to the favour and indulgence you have honoured me with.”

“ Well, well,” returned she, smiling, “ of that *we are to judge*, and a week hence we will give our opinion more decidedly on that subject.”

Our readers may possibly recollect that we mentioned Clara Percy as no common character. Her good sense and peculiar turn of mind had taught her to discriminate worth under whatever garb it appeared, and to despise the frivolity of those every day characters, those trifling beings, who flutter

painful but only a temporary check to the sentiments fast rising in her bosom; for the regret soon passed away, and every succeeding conversation, and every coming day encreased her esteem, until imperceptible sensations more tender obtained a place in her heart, and discovered the nature of them unconsciously, when he tremulously announced his intended departure.

Perhaps never did Clara feel a more lively tenderness for her beloved mother, than at the moment when she invited Lascelles to spend another week with them; and in that little week, the hearts of both had spoke a language by their eyes perfectly understood, though delicacy on both sides kept it from bursting into words.

Mrs. Percy was not unobservant of this silent intercourse, nor at all displeased at its progress. If Lascelles was a widower and a father, he was not three and thirty, exceedingly agreeable in his person, pleasing in his manners, and his heart and principles she

she had little doubt were both unexceptionable; he had a good income, his children provided for by his generous brother, and to such a man, who had obtained a knowledge of the world by many painful events, and without dishonour fixing on his character,—to such a man she thought she could resign her loved Clara, and her fortune, with perfect confidence that her honour and happiness would be in safe keeping.

Thus disposed on all sides to mutual love and confidence, hearts so ingenuous wore no disguise; words were not requisite to betray their feelings, and the day previous to Lascelles's departure, he seized an opportunity, when alone with Mrs. Percy, to explain the nature of his sentiments towards her lovely daughter, and the exact situation in which he stood with his brother and his children.

"Conscious of my presumption," said he, "I have not had the temerity to offer
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any but the most common civilities to Miss Percy, and carefully guarded the secret of my heart from her observation. On the first discovery of the power she had imperceptibly gained over it, when a simple incident convinced me beyond a doubt of the dangerous delusion of my senses, in supposing I meant to indulge admiration and respect for an object so amiable, without stepping beyond the boundaries they prescribed, my immediate resolution was to withdraw from a temptation I had no longer the power to resist. Ah! Madam, you condescended to entreat, I may say command me to pass another week in your delightful society;—my rebel heart scarcely waited for the request so gratifying to its feelings,—and now, what can I say—I must at once banish myself from your presence for ever, or appear a presumptuous man, by soliciting your indulgence and interest. One word from you will lead to
aspiring

aspiring hope, or consign me to silence and despair."

"In a few words then," replied Mrs. Percy, giving him her hand, "go and consult your worthy brother; if his sentiments accord with your wishes, return to us and make your own interest with Clara. I will not absolutely assure you of success, but I hope it; for seldom has it occurred that my daughter and I have differed in our judgment of persons and characters.—You have my good wishes, but Clara deserves from me a free and unbiassed choice. All I request is, that to me alone you confide this secret of your heart, until authorized to be more explicit by your brother's approbation.—Your income and my daughter's fortune will be sufficient for happiness and domestic comforts;—we will not be a tax on the liberality of a generous man, you have enough already, and your children shall not be robbed of their uncle's property by any connexions of mine."

As

As all description would fail in attempting to paint the rapturous gratitude of Lascelles, we shall leave them to the imagination of our readers, and only observe that this conversation had such an effect on the features, from the delightful hopes which glowed in his bosom, that never, perhaps, did he look so handsome, or appear more amiable than on this day, though the following one was marked for their separation.

Clara had seen from her chamber window, unperceived by them, her mother and her guest in earnest conversation; the result of which seemed to have conveyed mutual satisfaction. — Now, though Mr. Lascelles had “*so carefully* guarded the secret of his heart,” it had long since been disclosed to the mistress of it by intuition, by sympathy, and his tell-tale eyes. She was at no loss, therefore, to conjecture the true nature of their private conversation, nor the flattering appearance it wore to the indulgence of her sentiments in his favour.

When,

When, however, he took leave of them at night, proposing to set off very early in the morning, his emotions were but ill concealed, as he expressed an "ardent hope of being permitted, within a very short period, to return and enjoy the inexpressible happiness of the charming society he must ever quit with regret."

His manner hurried, his face in a glow, and his words uttered in a tremulous tone of voice, could not fail of affecting Clara; whose farewell was scarcely articulate, and whose emotions were similar to his, in defiance of all the resolution she struggled to assume before her mother and brothers.— But they were too delicate to notice her confusion, and the happy Lascelles departed with an encreased hope of a speedy return and a favourable reception.

Not to dwell on scenes of courtship too frequently described to afford any variety or amusement, we shall only say, that Mr. George Lascelles accompanied his brother
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on a visit to Mrs. Percy, where all terms and settlements were signed and sealed, to the entire satisfaction of each party.—Mr. Lascelles, charmed with William's intended bride, and delighted with the whole family, felt an encrease to his own happiness in liberally contributing to establish that of his brother, and in assuming to himself the title and rights of a parent to his beloved boys.—Those children of a woman ever dear to the remembrance of Lascelles, who for so many years were the objects of his constant tenderness and anxiety, never for a moment lost ground in his affections; and it was equally his pride and delight to see they were no less beloved by his amiable Clara, whose whole study was to prove her affection for the father, by her unremitting care and tenderness towards the children of an estimable and respectable mother, once so dear to her husband.

Her conduct in this sacred duty encreased the adoration of her happy Lascelles, entitled

titled her to the love and respect of all who had the pleasure to be acquainted with her, and ensured to her the greatest of all blessings—*self approbation*.

Within twelve months after their marriage Clara was brought to bed of a beautiful little girl, and the hour in which she became a mother taught her to feel more affection for those children deprived of so great a blessing;—they equally shared her heart with her own, and thus happy, and conveying happiness to all connected with her, we shall for the present take our leave of the amiable Mrs. Lascelles and her worthy husband.



CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Then fresh tears stood on her youthful cheek, as doth the honey-dew upon a gathered lily almost withered.”

WE shall pass over four years, in which poor Thompson's little protegee had remained with Mrs. Frampton, and through the unremitting attention of Miss Betterson, and the emulation of her young heart to deserve the continued favour of her kind preceptress, she had made an astonishing progress in every branch of education she was permitted to be acquainted with.

Mrs.

Mrs. Fitzwilliam had been induced to narrow the limits of the general plan of instruction, by the artifice of her nieces.—Fanny had not been interrogated on the subject by Meredith or his friends, they supposed she possessed, in common with others, all the advantages that the school afforded; and when she returned to Mrs. Frampton, that lady was desired to continue Miss Fanny Thompson on the same plan marked out by her late benefactress.

The poor girl often felt the consequences of her apparent degradation from others, by the haughty impertinence of some ill-bred and bad tempered misses, whose chief merit lay in their high birth, or their riches; and who, while they affected the utmost contempt for the poor orphan Fanny, were not a little mortified in seeing themselves excelled by her in many points, and often held up as an example to those much older, and very superior in situation to herself.

Mrs.

Mrs. Frampton could not withhold her approbation, though but coldly expressed; but in Miss Betterson Fanny had the happiness to possess a sincere and invaluable friend, who seized every opportunity to praise her industry and talents, which was a sufficient stimulative to the grateful girl not to relax in her duties, or disgrace the kind approbation of her instructress.

Four years thus passed on, her schooling regularly paid for, her pocket very well supplied, and her cloaths always genteel, and but little inferior to the highest and proudest titled Miss among her companions.

Sometimes, indeed, she paid the tax levied on her by envy and pride, when she could not avoid hearing many impertinent and unfeeling allusions to her birth and poverty, as incompatible with the appearance she was permitted to assume by "the folly of her *charitable friends*."

Continued repetition of such insults at length ceased to produce the effect intended ;

tended ; Miss Betterson taught her to despise their impotent malice, and as reason matured in her young bosom, she grew callous to their unprovoked ill-will, and redoubled her efforts to obtain excellence in what she learnt, as the severest mortification she could retort on them.

Fanny was now near ten years old, and from the many melancholy circumstances impressed upon her mind at an early age, and the uncommon pains Miss Betterson had taken to improve her naturally good understanding, she had acquired a habit of thinking, and a serious turn that led her to devote every hour to some useful employment, beneficial to herself or others.

Twice in the course of her being at school, from the death of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, she had seen young Meredith, and had frequently received little elegant trifles, as presents, from him, which were endeared by his kindness and attention.

Doctor

Doctor Douglas had paid her frequent visits, and one vacation she had passed a fortnight at his house.—But the disposition of his maiden sister was dissimilar from his, she was not fond of young people, and less so of such as could not contribute much to her entertainment, and not at all to her self-consequence.

Thus Fanny was not desired to repeat her visit, nor had she the inclination, if such a request had been made;—she loved the doctor, but feared and disliked his sister.

About six months after the period we have been speaking of, the poor girl encountered two severe misfortunes; her young friend, Meredith, was sent abroad by his guardian, to travel for five years.—He had previously taken an affectionate leave of her, and requested she would remain at her school till his return, promising frequently to write and inform himself of her health; adding, that his guardian and the doctor had engaged to protect her, and supply

supply every thing requisite for her future comforts.

For some days she was inconsolable, but her good friend by tenderness and reasoning had succeeded in calming her sorrows, when a second stroke overwhelmed her with deep affliction.—Doctor Douglas and his sister were called to Lisbon, by an old uncle between eighty and ninety, whose fortune was very considerable; and having outlived his wife and children, thought fit to demand the presence of his only relatives, to close his eyes and enjoy his property.

The doctor, between fifty and sixty, in very easy circumstances, felt no great desire to attend the mandate of a man, who had long shut up his heart and correspondence from his brother's family; but Miss Douglas, who wanted two years of fifty, could not be so abstracted from the love of riches, and a wish to share in wealth and splendor. Her repeated attacks upon the sensibility

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He had known and loved young Meredith's father, and consented to the trust reposed in him, of being guardian to his only child; with a firm resolution strictly to perform the sacred charge, and in every sense of the word, to be a second father to the orphan of his friend.

Accidentally he happened to be in Wales at the time of Mrs. Fitzwilliam's decease; and was no stranger to the character of Mrs. Bruce, for whom he felt the highest contempt. Greatly pleased with the disposition and principles of Meredith, feeling the most generous compassion for the poor little girl, deprived of her only friend, and unfortunately left without any support by the selfish conduct of Mrs. Bruce, he warmly coincided in the sentiments expressed by his young charge, to fulfil every intention and bequest of his aunt's in her favour; and when Meredith left England, Sir Robert assured him of his punctual re-

mittance of her pension, and every attention to her personal convenience.

He had kept his word; Dr. Douglas had been his agent, and now that he also was about to quit the kingdom, he wrote to his steward, who was a resident on his estate, desiring he would answer every demand of Mrs. Frampton's, for herself, and for the accommodation of her pupil. To Fanny he also wrote, assuring her of his attention and regard, and recapitulating the orders he had given to his steward.

These letters were perfectly satisfactory to Mrs. Frampton, but they failed to console Fanny for the loss of her friends.— She had more solidity than many girls of sixteen. From the circumstances under which she existed, her forlorn and dependent state wrung her heart, and overwhelmed her with melancholy; her spirits constitutionally cheerful gradually sunk under the painful state of her feelings, and Miss Betterson saw with real concern and compassion,

compassion, that her young pupil was declining in health, and suffering under a mental disease which threatened the most fatal effects.

In vain she reasoned, soothed, or reproached her for indulging unwarrantable sorrow and unjust fears, when she still had a friend in Sir Robert Marsh, and in five years, or less, young Meredith would return; the poor girl would burst into tears, hang on her neck, and exclaim,—“ Ah, Miss Betterton, you have a mother, you have relations, I have no human being that is anxious about me. Maintained by charity, as I am but too often reproached with in this house, and since Dr. Douglas has left me, observing daily an increase of coldness in all but you; disdainful looks, cruel observations on my dress, and many, many insults that cannot be explained, and which every day now as I grow older I feel more painfully,—oh, my dear Miss Betterton, I cannot support it! I cannot exist

and more of late than ever, whenever I am from you, and attempt to associate with others, I am sure you would wish me away; for to live despised and shunned by one's school-fellows, every day worse and worse, 'tis more than I can bear.—My dear, dear Miss Betterson, I must die if I don't leave this house.”

These conversations often repeated, with the increased dejection and fading form of her young pupil, convinced the humane Miss Betterson that she would assuredly fall a victim to her sensibility if not removed from Mrs. Frampton's; in consequence of which she repeated to that lady some of their conversations, and the unjust and unfeeling behaviour of the young ladies in general towards the unfortunate girl,—who daily felt it more intolerable, as her understanding became enlightened.

Mrs. Frampton heard her with great coldness in her manner.—“I have,” said she, “often remonstrated with the young ladies

ladies on this very subject, but what can I do?—They think themselves disgraced by such an associate. The girl has but too much pride in spite of her situation; she feels and resents, instead of being humble, and trying to please, or seeking to engage their pity. In short, I would not voluntarily have sent her from my house, though she certainly gives no credit to it in any shape; but as she is unhappy and wishes to leave me, conscious that her dislike, and the distress you talk of, can in no way implicate me, as I have always treated her justly and kindly,—if she is so very desirous to change her residence, I will very readily write to Sir Robert Marsh to comply with her wish, and remove her from hence as soon as possible.”

This resolution was followed up, and in a short time after, Sir Robert’s housekeeper and the steward arrived, in a carriage, to take Miss Thompson to Ringwood-Park, where she was to remain a short time, till

Sir Robert could hear of a proper school for her.

Much as Fanny wished to quit the house, when she came to be separated from Miss Betterton, her heart revolted against it;—she then found all other evils were light against this heavy one of parting, perhaps for ever, from the only being who seemed to love her.—“She could not go, no, she was sorry and ashamed to have given so much trouble, but she could not, would not leave Miss Betterton!”

“You should have known your own mind, Miss,” said Mrs. Frampton, “it is now too late, you must and shall go, no discontented person remains in my house; nor need you give yourself up to these foolish tears and regrets, for in all probability Miss Betterton will not be long here, such partialities are by no means proper in a house like mine.—Pray assist her into the carriage.”

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This order was obeyed, and the poor girl, deluged in tears, was in a moment placed in it, and driven from the door.

Neither the housekeeper nor steward were entirely devoid of sensibility, but they were a little disgusted with the folly of the girl. —“ So like a child, didn’t know what she would have,—crying to come away, and then crying to stay again.”—They could not enter into the nature of her feelings, but repeatedly bid her “be quiet and dry up her tears;—she was going to a fine house, where she might be very happy, if she chose to be good tempered.”

Tears must cease at last, and Fanny had indulged her’s without restraint to their full vent; when, therefore, she wiped off their traces from her cheeks, and only a heavy sigh now and then issued from her bosom, Mrs. Wharton sought to engage her in conversation, and was extremely inquisitive about her school, and reasons for disliking it, and among other things, she asked, how
long

long her parents had been dead, and she under the guardianship of Sir Robert?

These questions were exceedingly distressing to poor Fanny. The mention of her parents gave a cold pang to her heart, and in a very visible tremor she answered, "they had been dead many years; that she had particular reasons to dislike the school, but was much grieved to part from the teacher who she dearly loved."

The woman saw she was "trembling and in trouble," therefore ceased to importune her with questions; and only assured her she would be quite happy at the park, which afforded her an opportunity of describing all its beauties, and the history of the few neighbours round it.

Mrs. Wharton had lived about two years at this house of Sir Robert's, consequently was entirely unacquainted with any thing relative to Mrs. Fitzwilliam and her family, more than that a lady of that name once lived at the abbey, whose heir was under the
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care of Sir Robert.—But uninterested in his concerns, she talked of the family now resident in it, among the other neighbours; and Fanny prudently resolved not to say any thing of *her residence there*, without Sir Robert should mention it, and this wise precaution in so young a girl, saved her from many impertinent enquiries, and much mortification.

Arrived at the park, Fanny had an exceeding good bed chamber given to her, and found herself very kindly treated; for her cloaths and linen being handsome and in great plenty, gave the housekeeper an idea of her being, as she said, “born a gentlewoman, and she dared to say, with a good fortune. Under that conviction, she was very civil and attentive to Miss, who was every day rambling in the beautiful walks and shrubberies, half broken-hearted with regret at being parted from Miss Betterson; blaming her own impatience and folly in flying from evils that were only wounding

parture of Meredith and Dr. Douglas, occasioned to her much anxiety and many melancholy nights, which were passed in tears for the disappointments of the day;—but this seeming forgetfulness of the poor girl had arisen, not from any fault in his heart, or defect in his memory.

A very few days before Fanny's removal to Ringwood-Park, when Sir Robert and his lady were at their villa, in Berkshire, he had mentioned to her the situation of the child; and wished enquiries might be made for a school in that neighbourhood, where, being unknown and recommended by them, she would not be subject to the insults which made her so uncomfortable at Mrs. Frampton's.

Lady Marsh, more than twenty years younger than her husband, he had married about five years before, merely for her beauty.—She had neither birth nor fortune to boast of; her friends, in very indifferent circumstances, saw, and heard from others, that

that Patty was a great beauty, and might make her fortune, if she could be well dressed and be publicly seen.

Under this idea, every shilling they could raise, by often very great deprivations to themselves of their daily wants, was spent in fineries for Patty,—and Pall-Mall, St. James's, and Bond-Street saw the beauty constantly exhibiting herself for the best bidder.

Sir Robert, about five-and-forty, was a bachelor; he, among others, saw and was greatly struck with the face and figure of the adventuress.—He followed her home, and soon commenced an acquaintance with the young lady, who was not deficient in common sense, and had *a more than common* share of art and low cunning.

In short, she contrived by a well acted shew of modesty and discretion, to acquire such an influence over the heart of the enamoured baronet, that in less than three weeks from their first interview, she became

came a lady with a good jointure, and Sir Robert, in his own opinion, the happiest of men.

Lady Marsh was much more admired than ever Miss Patty had been, and intoxicated with pride and conceit, her whole study was dress, pleasure, and dissipation:—She could do nothing wrong; he was gratified by having his wife admired, and indulged her in every wish of her capricious fancy. After some time, however, he began to observe something very like indifference in her to *his pleasure or comfort*, and that the notice of younger men threw him in the back ground,—At first he gently remonstrated, and redoubled his tenderness and attention;—but remonstrances were not to the taste of his lady, and after repeated struggles, many disagreeable alterations, and the most painful anxieties on his part, “admiration for Patty’s beauty,” his love of domestic peace, and the persevering spirit of his lady, which he had
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neither inclination nor power to controul without an entire break-up of all love and confidence between them—he found, that he had diminished his own consequence by raising her's; and that, if he wished to preserve even an appearance of affection, or obtain an hour of comfort in his own house, he must quietly resign the sceptre, and be content to enjoy the privilege of a secondary station there, and submit to the all-powerful guidance of his sovereign lady.

As Lady Marsh soon figured as one of the most distinguished among the gay circles of fashion, she had, in the course of her extensive visits, met with Mrs. Bruce and her two daughters, who now lived in a style of elegance that was a passport into the first circles.

Similar dispositions had drawn the ladies into some small degree of acquaintance, and if Lady Marsh retained a faint idea of hearing from Sir Robert his utter dislike and contempt for the principles and conduct of
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Mrs. Bruce, such a reprobation on his part—had no influence over her;—"What had she to do with young Meredith, the little mean foundling, or the whimsies of an old woman, who shamefully, in her opinion, wished to will away her property from her own sister."

Sir Robert in vain tried to resist the introduction of Mrs. Bruce into his own house.—"He was certainly at liberty to refuse being one of their party, *she was far from exacting such a constraint on his inclinations, as to be civil to her friends; but surely she had the same right to choose her own associates; and ladies who had in no shape offended her, or infringed in any manner the laws of society, were entitled to attention and politeness in every circle.*—For her part, she admired Mrs. Bruce as a sensible woman of the world, and should with great pleasure and avidity cultivate an intimacy that promised so much advantage to herself."

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There was no appeal against these conclusive arguments ; that good, but weak man, brought into absolute subjection to the will of an insolent ungrateful woman, whose beauty had fascinated his senses, and whose spirit and art had subdued his reason, gave up the contest, and with silent vexation and regret, saw Mrs. Bruce and her daughters the declared favourites of his wife, in consequence of their insidious flatteries and perseverance, while a scornful air of triumph was visible in their features, whenever his eyes met theirs.

It may appear strange, that a gentleman of sense, and of uncommon goodness of heart, who had never appeared deficient in spirit and resolution, when called upon to exert either, should so tamely submit to the imperious controul of a woman he had raised to a rank in life beyond her expectations, and superior to her best hopes ; but whoever has a knowledge of the human breast, must know, that in the wisest and
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best hearts, there is often a predominating passion, which, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all lesser considerations, and gives the colour to their future lives, if not early checked before it acquires an unbounded influence over their reason.

Such was the passion which reigned, uncontrollable in the bosom of Sir Robert Marsh. He doted on the person of his wife; her wit, though of the commonest sort, her liveliness, and her daily improvement in fashionable manners, dazzled his senses, and gratified his pride.

Yet he was not blind to her extravagant follies, nor insensible to her caprice, when frequently, that is, when she had any great points to carry, she would affect fits of fondness she did not feel; and as suddenly change her tone, and become insolent and imperious, whichever mode she perceived was most likely to answer her purpose.

But, she was handsome, he delighted in her good humour and playfulness, how
then

then could he bear to contradict, or put her out of temper?—It was impossible, to vex her made him miserable; and thus to preserve harmony, he actually gave up his peace of mind, and was the slave of an artful capricious woman, who in truth laughed at and despised him.

Sir Robert Marsh, had he married prudently would have been a happy man, from the worthiness of his own heart; but suffering his eye to mislead his judgment, he lost both his consequence and domestic comforts, became useless to the world, insignificant to his family and friends, and sunk in his own esteem.

Thus situated in his domestic arrangements, Sir Robert had long resigned all pretensions to act for himself. Indifferent to every thing but the pleasure of his wife, and solicitous only to preserve her smiles and good humour, she was the oracle he consulted; and her decrees were as absolute
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and irrevocable as the laws of the Greeks and Persians.

When Mrs. Frampton's letter came, requesting Miss Thompson might be removed from her house, as she appeared discontented, and in an indifferent state of health, Sir Robert gave it to his lady, and made it *his request* that she would enquire if the little girl could be received into some school in their neighbourhood; at the same time shewing a letter from Miss Betterton, on the subject of Fanny's sufferings, from the illiberality of her companions.

Lady Marsh paid very little attention to this letter as a matter of interest in favour of the sufferer, but coolly observed,—“ it was plain the girl had much unbecoming pride. She had heard from Mrs. Bruce of her presumption and impertinence; and was of opinion it would be more proper to bring her up under a good housekeeper, than in a ladies school. For the present she might go to Ringwood Park, in the
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care of Wharton; and at her leisure she would look out for a suitable residence for a girl, who had no other prospect but to obtain her bread by her own industry, and whose pride ought to be checked by employments suited to her circumstances."

In vain Sir Robert reminded her of his promises to Meredith, of the sum he generously allowed for her education and support, agreeable to the tenor of his late aunt's memorandums.

She declared he had no right as a guardian to permit the youth thus to fool away his money; the lavish generosity of a boy should not be encouraged. If she had decent cloathing, and was brought up in habits of industry and frugality, he would do the girl a real service; but to encourage her in pride, and educate her with children of fashion and fortune, would eventually prove her ruin.

She added,—“ I will take care of her, and see that she has proper instructions,

Some months passed away without any letters or further orders from Sir Robert or his lady; Fanny, however, had found a resource in the library against melancholy, and was no less pleased to be employed in assisting Mrs. Wharton in her necessary avocations. She learnt every thing pointed out by Lady Marsh; it was choice work, not imposed by the good housekeeper, consequently it diverted her ideas, and with her books usefully filled up every hour.

In this vegetative way she passed a full year and a half, without any variation in her mode of existence, or seeing any company out of the line in which she was placed. If she was not happy, she had nothing to complain of on the score of affection, for her docility and sweetness of temper gained the hearts of her domestic friends. But she would sometimes sigh, frequently weep when left to herself at night; she reflected on the tenderness Mrs. Fitzwilliam had treated her with in the few weeks she was with

with her previous to her lamented death—on Meredith's kindness—on Dr. Douglas—on her dear Miss Betterton, who had long since left the country. She had lost all her friends, every one who seemed to be interested for her,—and above all, that Lieutenant Thompson, who her benefactress had often told her was her earliest friend; but whether related to her, or what was become of him, she was totally ignorant.

These recollections often occurred as her reason matured, and caused her many painful hours. The present monotonous life, she had sense enough to discern did not accord with the intentions of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, she was daily losing ground in the parts of education allotted for her; she could read French well, but without any one to converse with, she lost the facility of speaking in that language. Nor had she an opportunity now to profit by the example of well-bred girls; to copy their manners, or catch little ideas of

drawing and dancing, which accomplishments were not included in the plan for her education; but from chance observation, and a quickness of intellect, she sought to imitate and practise when alone.

All these possible advantages were entirely lost. The steward improved her in writing and arithmetic, Mrs. Wharton in needle-work, pickling, and preserving, in all which she became a very great proficient, and this was the whole extent of her knowledge at twelve years of age.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXIV.

"How easy to give happiness, or to create misery in a youthful bosom of lively sensibility! an unfortunate being, who, perhaps, has no relative, no friend, to open its bosom to receive her sorrows, or participate in her afflictions!"

AT this period of Fanny's life, though the faculties of her mind lay dormant, her person had greatly improved; she was rather tall of her age, and elegantly formed, though her carriage might not be said to be fashioned by the hand of the graces, yet it was easy, and not vulgar.

She was a clear brunette, an animated complexion, expressive dark grey eyes with

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long dark eye-lashes; an oval face, good teeth, and fine hair, which was suffered to grow wild, and hung in great profusion over her forehead and shoulders.

Her nose might, by some, be thought rather too large, and her mouth not exactly a model of perfection, therefore, though every one who saw her, would pronounce her a very pretty genteel girl, she was not a beauty;—she was attractive, but not dazzling.

Such was Fanny Thompson when Mrs. Wharton received her lady's commands to send the girl up to town in the stage, as she intended to place her in her nursery; having two young ladies, one of five, the other four years of age, to whom Fanny might be useful.

When this order was communicated to their little favourite by the worthy domestics, her first emotions were joy and exultation; but seeing the tears which filled the eyes of her two friends, an instant change

change was given to her feelings, and the sudden contrariety made her burst into tears, which were accompanied by Mrs. Wharton's, who wept aloud.

After some time given on all sides to this effusion of grief and sensibility, and mutual regrets for the enforced separation, Fanny enquired in what way she was to be made useful to the two little ladies?

The steward replied, he supposed she was to teach them to read and work, and keep them company.

"Me teach! I instruct them to read and work!—Dear me, no one so young was a teacher at Mrs. Frampton's."

"No," rejoined he, "but very often ladies of fashion take a fancy to such nice girls as you to be in the nursery.—I am sure you can teach any of them to read and work, ~~aye~~, and to write and figure too, for all you are so young.—Yes, and please God, I have no doubt but our master, Sir

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Robert,

Robert, will be your friend, when once he sees and knows you."

"O, he is a very good gentleman," added Mrs. Wharton, "I am glad he will see you, though we shall be very, very sorry to part with you.—I am sure it will grieve my heart; many a long day, we shall be dull enough, God knows,—still, at your age, 'tis time you should see a little of the world; and though, to tell you a secret, my lady is no great things, either in temper or civility, yet I am sure our master will be kind to you."

"I hope so," returned Fanny, sighing, "he was very kind to me once, and I had several friends then.—I wonder when Master Meredith will return,—I am certain he is too good to forget me, or let any one use me ill.—But, perhaps, I may never see him again, and you know I have no father, or mother, or relation that I know of,—a poor little orphan not acknowledged by any body."

body." She burst into tears, and hid her face in the bosom of Mrs. Wharton.

Both she and the steward endeavoured to tranquillize her mind and raise her spirits, but the terms in which they had spoken of Lady Marsh sunk deep into her bosom; she began to dread she knew not what, and regretted, more than ever, her folly and pride, which had removed her from the care of Mrs. Frampton, where she might have remained till Mr. Meredith's return.

"Perhaps," said she, with bitter self-reproach, "*perhaps he will forsake me*, when he hears I wished to get away from the school where he desired me to remain and to improve in my education,—now I know nothing, and shall be ashamed to appear before Sir Robert."

These kind of reflections tormented the poor girl night and day; the good steward was determined she should not go alone in the stage to London, but to accompany her himself, and at his own expence. Mrs.

Wharton

Wharton got a friend to stop with her in his absence, and after many floods of tears, sighs, and lamentations, poor Fanny was torn from her arms, and placed in the coach more dead than alive, and insensible for some hours to all the remonstrances and kindness of her companion.

But grief is not of long duration in young minds, nor can tears flow for ever.—When she had given unrestrained indulgence to both, by degrees she grew more composed, and attended to the friend who had accompanied her. Fortunately they were alone the first day in their journey, and the steward, who had formerly lived much among the gay and fashionable, took this opportunity to enlighten the mind of his young companion, and give her some knowledge of the world she was going to be introduced to, though in a questionable shape.

He described the manners of the great, and the caprices of the young and dissipated of both sexes.—He pointed out the mode
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of behaviour most likely to conciliate the favour of his lady; and while he charged her never to depart from *truth*, the first ground-work of all moral duties, nor forfeit her integrity for any worldly advantage, he advised her to be gentle, obliging, and industrious,—to study the temper of Lady Marsh, and the young ones in the nursery,—and, to the extent of her power, make it her constant rule to obey and oblige them in every desire consistent with truth, and the superior duty she owed to her creator. In short, the good old gentleman spoke both to her heart and to her reason, and his admonitions made an indelible impression on her mind.

We shall say nothing of her journey, or of her amazement and delight when she passed through the London streets to the superb mansion of Sir Robert Marsh, in Portland-Place; but when told—"here was to be her residence," her heart sunk, her limbs trembled,—she caught the arm of her friend,

protégée of the worthy Mrs. Fitzwilliam, and friend of my amiable charge, Meredith, deserves both your care and our notice."

Saying this, he seated the much trembling Fanny in a chair, and hastily pouring out some wine,—“My good Raymond, sit down and take a glass of wine,” and directly carried another to Fanny.

“Sir Robert, I am astonished at your behaviour,—do you mean to insult me, Sir? but I shall retire, since you have no respect either for me or for yourself.”

She hastily arose and quitted the room with a look so terrible to the feelings of the horror-struck girl, that she fainted and fell against Sir Robert; who also stood petrified at the storm he had so thoughtlessly raised by his humane hospitalify.

The old steward, shaking his head, and softly muttering,—“Sad doings, very sad doings!” was frightened by seeing the situation of Fanny. Sir Robert had rung the bell. Happily the deprivation of sense was but

but temporary, and a small sprinkling of water soon restored the poor girl to a painful consciousness of her ungracious reception from Lady Marsh; nor could all the kind soothings of Sir Robert alleviate her terror and affliction.

The baronet more hurt than ever he had been in his life, by the inhumanity of his lady, considerably desired Raymond to console Fanny; while he stepped up stairs to explain things, and reconcile his wife, who had been some how unintentionally offended.

The steward exerted all his kindness and all his good sense to compose his little friend, assuring her that some mistake or blunder of the servant's had put the lady in such a momentary rage, which would soon blow over.

"Oh, that I could return with you!" cried she, regardless of his soothings; "I am sure in this house I shall be very miserable!"

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He endeavoured to do away these unfavourable impressions. — Mean time Sir Robert had found his lady more tractable than he expected, and to his great joy escaped the severity of her reproaches, as she chose to transfer them upon the unoffending old steward.

The truth was, she had presently recollected that her decided reprobation might lead her husband to send back the girl, under a pretence of consideration for her pleasure, by which measure she would lose a person she determined to make useful, and whose reputed pride it would be her delight to humble; particularly now that she had seen her, and in seeing felt an inconceivable aversion to the poor orphan, simply because she appeared amiable and interesting.

Having made up her mind to detain her, she was contriving a conciliatory message so far as to send her two children down to conduct her to the nursery, when Sir Robert appeared,

appeared, with an air half-determined, and half-supplicatory; and met a countenance disarmed of all its ferocity, and a calmness of aspect and manner he was far from expecting.

She chose this moment for a tender scene, and holding out her hand, uttered a slight apology for the passion of a moment, when a coincidence of circumstances, immaterial to relate, had robbed her of a command over her temper. — “But ’tis past,” said she, “I surely had no intention to frighten the girl; but I was a little hurt at that forward old fellow presuming to sit in my presence.”

Sir Robert felt the impropriety and impertinence of the “*my presence*,” from one whose situation in former days entitled her to no distinction, and by no means superior to the worthy man she assumed a privilege to despise;—but at present it was his wish to conciliate, not to oppose, he therefore apologized for the steward, on account of his

his age, and being a sort of heirloom in the family, having from childhood lived with his uncle and father.

He then mildly entreated her kindness and countenance to Fanny, who, rusticated in the country, had been *awed by her presence*, and appeared to great disadvantage. "I am sure," added he, "that Meredith, on his return, will be grateful to you for every indulgence shewn to her, as he never omits mentioning of her in his letters, and always with kindness.—But, indeed, she must soon go to school again, as the poor thing has been long enough at the park to forget every thing she learnt at Mrs. Frampton's."

As this residence at the park, conveyed she thought an oblique reflection on her, it was with difficulty she repressed her resentment;—but she could command both her passions and her feelings, her present plan was apparently to oblige him, she, therefore, had the children brought from
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the nursery, and bade them attend their father, and return with a young companion she had selected to instruct and amuse them.

The little girls hastened down with Sir Robert, who introduced them to Fanny as young friends delighted with having a new associate; and requested she would love them, as he was persuaded they would be happy to obtain her affection.

She was indeed charmed with the artless pleasure they expressed on seeing her; they had already taken her hands and were asking a thousand questions in a breath.

"Lady Marsh," said Sir Robert to his steward, whose eyes glistened when he observed smiles of satisfaction beam on Fanny's face, "Lady Marsh desires me to say, my old friend, that she is concerned if she hurt your feelings, she had unfortunately been put out of humour."

"O dear, your honour, pray say no more, my lady is very good to condescend thus to her servant.—I hope her ladyship will like

Miss

Miss Fanny better when she knows more of her.—Poor Wharton is heart-broken, and I should grieve sadly but that I know 'tis right she should leave us, and be made more comfortable; she is a surprising sensible, good and lovely young creature, and I am very certain will deserve my lady's favour and affection."

"I do not doubt it," answered Sir Robert.—"Go, my dear girls, take your new companion to your mother's dressing-room, she wishes to see her."

Fanny rose at these words, though with a palpitating heart. Her old friend took her hand, wished God to bless her, and every worldly good to fall upon her; adding, —"If my lady will allow of the indulgence, Mrs. Wharton will be right glad to have a pretty letter from you sometimes; for we shall miss you much, indeed we shall."

Tears dropped on his cheek, Fanny's flowed as freely, as she pressed his hand between her's, and sobbed out her thanks
and

and blessings to him and his good Mrs. Wharton; assuring him she would write, if Sir Robert and his lady would allow her to do so.

The baronet, much moved by these simple effusions of love and attachment on both sides, gave his ready assent to the old man's wish; who declining to stop, as he had a nephew in the city, with whom he had business, and should only remain two days in London, said, he would wait on his master again, if he had any commands, before he left town.

Sir Robert assured him he had none; but if he had leisure, and it was convenient to himself, to pass a day in Portland-Place, he would always be welcome.

The good old man took his leave. The girls tripped away to their mamma's dressing-room; and to the infinite joy and surprise of Fanny, she met with a gracious reception from the lady she so much dreaded to see, and was informed she was to dine with

with her young friends, and sleep in the same room.

This arrangement was pleasing news to her, for, in her mind's eye, she could not but recal the terrible looks Lady Marsh had thrown on her in the parlour;—though she seemed condescendingly kind now, could her kindness do away the frightful impression her words had left on her bosom?—Fanny had a lively sensibility, and a keen feeling, from long suffering, of every look and word tending to shew contempt and displeasure. She was delighted with the change in her manner of treating her; but it was her most desired wish to be as seldom in her sight as possible.

The following day the young folks appeared to be perfectly satisfied with each other; and Fanny readily undertook to teach the little girls their letters, and to make use of their needles.

Lady Marsh, like most selfishly extravagant people, was very careful that no
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extra expences should be incurred in which she had no share; and indeed was parsimonious in the extreme in all the common expenditure of the family, making it her boast to Sir Robert, that her care, and her economy, saved him many hundreds a year.

In conformity with this frugal policy, she would have no governess for her children before they were ten years old. In vain Sir Robert urged the expediency of early instruction, of good principles and proper ideas being inculcated from infancy; she positively adhered to her plan, until it one day occurred to her that Fanny Thompson, who Wharton spoke of as a prodigy in reading, working, and writing, might be made a useful assistant to her girls, without any expence.

No sooner had this idea fastened on her mind, than she proposed to her husband, as a compliment to him, and an act of kindness to Meredith's protegee, to send for her, as a pretty companion for Emma

and Albinia. She would give them a smattering of instruction; and when she had a governess, as perhaps if they profited by what Fanny could teach, she might have in a year or two, then Fanny also should have the advantages of having her education completed, in a superior degree to what a country boarding school could bestow.

Sir Robert readily accorded to the *kind and considerate arrangement of his dear wife's*; and she was to direct the execution of her plan in whatever way she pleased.

Little did he suspect she would order the child to be sent up alone, nor had she told him when she actually expected her; — therefore when Raymond sent in his name as Fanny's conductor, he cast a look of kindness on his lady, for her consideration in ordering the steward to bring her up.

Great indeed was his surprise and vexation at her address to poor Raymond, and her reception of the little girl. Her natural

tural pride and insolence had burst out on the entrance of Fanny, an object so fascinating she had little expected to see; her loveliness, and the reception Sir Robert gave her, inflamed her bosom with anger and malice, which she had neither inclination nor prudence to suppress. Her unlooked for behaviour both shocked and highly displeased the baronet, and gave birth to a momentary fit of resentment.

When she flounced out of the room she soon recollected that on this very day, a few fits of fondness were to be played off. She had seen a diamond butterfly, with which she had fallen in love;—the Countess of Darwin had displayed a most elegant pearl one—how much more beautiful was the diamond one!

She reflected that not three months before, she had coaxed her husband out of a brooch and sleeve boys, which cost near two hundred guineas; and with all her effrontery, she knew not how to ask for the

diamond butterfly, which doubtless would amount to a still larger sum, from its peculiar make and valuable stones.

Thrown off her guard by the appearance of Fanny, she had forgot her plan for the day, till it recurred to her memory by seeing her jewel box; and then it was that her art prompted a different line of conduct, which succeeded so well, that the following day after Fanny's arrival, when the children and their young governess came to pay their devoirs after breakfast, and my lady seemed "charmed with such an acquisition as her new protegee, such a delightful little friend for her girls," that Sir Robert in the fulness of his heart, when he returned to dinner, presented his lady with the sparkling butterfly, whose brilliancy and elegance she had so greatly admired and talked of, "but without a hope of possessing so beautiful an ornament."

Thus was the good nature and liberality of a worthy man imposed upon by an artful

ful deceptive woman, whose heart was shut to every generous and noble sentiment, and self-gratification the only object of her consideration.

Two or three weeks passed away with a shew of affection towards Fanny, and with a more than common attention to her children and domestic quiet. One, and only one, little altercation had taken place in that time; Sir Robert wished his lady would permit Fanny to dine at their table when they had no company, this wish she firmly opposed, as extremely improper, an indulgence the girl was not entitled to,—her proper place to dine in was the nursery.—He was obliged to give up the point, and acknowledge the impropriety of such a request; she therefore only appeared with the Misses for half an hour when the dessert was introduced.

The summer season now fast advancing, the family prepared to pass a few months in Berkshire. Lady Marsh had lingered

behind most of her acquaintance in the circles of fashion, as she detested the country; but Sir Robert having business there, had with more resolution than was usual in him, decidedly objected to a watering place for that season.

Highly provoked at his pertinacity, she determined that he should enjoy but very little pleasure in his country retreat; and knowing that of all people among their visiting acquaintance, he most disliked the Bruce family, she wrote to Mrs. Bruce, who had been for some weeks in Derbyshire, requesting she and the young ladies would pass the remainder of the summer at her villa in Berkshire, and hasten to meet her there in the course of a fortnight.

She had soon an answer agreeable to her wishes; and anticipated with pleasure to her own feelings, the surprise and mortification of her husband. She knew his good-nature and politeness would not permit him to violate the rites of hospitality, and

and had therefore extended her invitation to Colonel Vincent and Mr. Harrowly, both gay, and in the high ton of fashion; and what was a stronger recommendation, both great admirers of her ladyship.

Sir Robert, tired with continual crowds and expensive dissipations, found it necessary for his health, and pecuniary arrangements, to visit his estates, and settle with his stewards; having had intimation more than once, that his expenditure, and calls upon them, greatly exceeded the rental of his lands, and had compelled them to borrow money to supply the increased demands for the last two years.

Startled by information of such difficulties as he had not the smallest idea of, he slightly mentioned to his lady a little embarrassment in his cash accounts, and requested she would economise a few months in the country. She made light of his complaint, and laughed at his request; but necessity compelled him to

persevere, and for once she was obliged to acquiesce with his desire, and give up her intended tour to Scotland.

But she complied with an ill grace, and determined he should share the disappointment he had inflicted on her.

They had been about ten days at Swinley Grove, when to the extreme astonishment of the baronet, Mrs. Bruce and her two fashionable daughters, two women and two men servants, with a carriage and its appendages, drove up to the hall door, and were received by Lady Marsh as welcome and expected guests.

She introduced them to Sir Robert, as "kind friends who condescended to rusticate with them the few months they should pass in the country; and flattered herself he was no less sensible than she was of the favour they conferred by their enlivening society."

Surprise and vexation were legible in his countenance; he coldly bowed, and uttered

a few unintelligible words correspondent to his looks. Such a reception would have shocked any delicate mind, and induced them to turn their horses heads from the inhospitable master of the mansion; but Mrs. Bruce was of a different order of beings—she had been accustomed to rule, and had too high an opinion of female consequence to consider a husband in any other than a secondary light.—She had also too often been an observer of Lady Marsh's despotic power, to feel in the least disconcerted by the cool regards of her husband.

The ladies retired to their dressing rooms, Sir Robert to his library. He saw his plans broken by the intrusion of these women; whether self-invited, or by the desire of his lady, their visit was equally disagreeable and unseasonable. The proud insolence of Mrs. Bruce, and the gay coquetry of her fashionable daughters, were detestable in his eyes; he knew their reputations were but

equivocal, and his wife's increased extravagance and fondness for company and cards; he had every cause to dread would not merely find countenance by such examples,—but their being inmates of his house would tend to the destruction of all his prudent and economic plans, so requisite to retrieve his fortune.

When they met at dinner, Sir Robert's politeness was evidently forced, and very formal, but they had been tutored to shut their eyes and ears to every occurrence not exactly in unison with their own feelings; consequently they took his outward civility on trust, and appeared perfectly easy and at home.

With the dessert came the Misses Marsh and the poor trembling Fanny.—She had been told who were the visitants, and but too well recollected the ill-treatment and mortifications she had endured from them. It was her earnest desire not to go down, but Lady Marsh had given peremptory orders

ders for her appearance, and she was compelled to obey.

"Good God!" exclaimed Mrs. Bruce, "Fanny Thompson surely!—Bless me, how the girl is grown! But I am astonished to see her here, we were informed she was an apprentice in Mrs. Frampton's school, and when Charlotte had her last letter from my nephew Meredith, he mentioned the girl as under the care of old Douglas."

"Pardon me, Madam," said Sir Robert, "you must be mistaken, unless the letter you allude to is of a very old date indeed; for Mr. Meredith knew, twelve months since, that this good girl had left *that* school."

"Yes, Mamma, *you are mistaken*, it was in a former letter, long ago, that my cousin mentioned Fanny's name;—in none of my late letters *has he noticed her at all*."

"It is of little consequence," returned Sir Robert, "she is now under my care, and a valuable acquisition for my little girls."

"Yes,"

"Yes," added his lady, throwing a disdainful glance on the trembling girl, "I sent for her to instruct Emma and Albinia in their letters, and teach them to use a needle.—The child is well enough informed for the first tuition in the nursery, and may make herself useful in *her way*, for two or three years, before she goes abroad in the world to get her bread."

Sir Robert, by his looks, seemed going to reply with some asperity; but Fanny, mortified by the scornful and sarcastic glances of the young ladies who did not vouchsafe to notice her by any other recognition;—much hurt by the unusual hauteur of her lady, and painfully affected by a recurrence to her residence in Malvern-Abbey, and the last affectionate regards of her benefactress—could no longer suppress the swelling tide of sorrow and resentment that overcharged her bosom, but was seized with a violent fit of tears and hysteric

teric sobs, that caused her to totter from the table where she stood, and would have fallen to the ground, had not Sir Robert caught her and supported her to a chair.

“Bless me!” exclaimed Lady Marsh, “what ails the girl?—What does she mean by playing off such airs as these?—The young miss is a mighty sensitive plant, indeed;—but she had better retire to the nursery, if she does not know how to behave. I should have thought she would have been ready to worship these ladies, as the near relatives of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, who took her up a deserted orphan and gave her an education.”

“For shame! for shame!” cried Sir Robert, interrupting her, “to wound the feelings of an unoffending being, thus before her enemies.—But let me tell you, Madam, she shall not be insulted by your guests!—I will protect her whilst she is under my roof, nor shall she enter this room again in such company. She is, indeed,

deed, "too sensitive" to endure the taunts of callous hearts."

The benevolent man, provoked to an unusual exertion by the conduct of Mrs. Bruce and her daughters, whose looks did not pass unnoticed by him, and previously out of humour by their visit, forgot at the moment the claims of politeness and hospitality; and with a countenance of severity and contempt, he led the weeping girl to the nursery, and ordered the servant to get her some wine and water, and endeavour to sooth her into composure.

His first intention was to retire to his library, but on recollection he returned to the dinner room.—"Well," said his lady, "I hope you have dried the tears of *Miss Thompson*, and reconciled her to her sad situation, since she is not to be taught her duty to these ladies."

"Lady Marsh," returned he in a solemn tone, "it would give me great pain were I to suppose you sent for this good little girl

girl designedly to treat her with unkindness and neglect. She has claims upon every soul of humanity for tenderness and compassion;—as to pecuniary ones, Meredith will not permit her to be obliged to any one but himself, nor shall she suffer in this house, *ill treatment*, while I am the master of it. These ladies must excuse me if I say, that I cannot easily expunge from my memory certain scenes in Malvern-Abbey that do but little honour to their hearts or their sex,—but I wish not to make unpleasant recriminations. Your guests are entitled to politeness, and I shall not intentionally, I am sure, infringe its rules, by any improper conduct on my part.”

“I think, Sir,” returned his lady, haughtily, “you have already gone much beyond the rules of good breeding;—but I flatter myself these ladies will think both the cause and effect too insignificant for any sentiment but contempt.”

Sir

Suppressed, but not wholly subdued, her insolence, ingratitude, her indelicate comparative reflection on the difference in their ages, with the oblique hint how little desirable *his* society was considered by her and her friends, altogether struck him most sensibly;—and in a moment roused that dormant spirit becoming a man of honour and feeling.

“Stop, Madam,” said he, “you have at length, ungrateful woman, provoked the resentment of that man whose heart was all your own;—who lived but to promote your pleasures—and who for years has existed but in your smiles. I scorn to recriminate or upbraid you, but from this moment your reign is at an end!—My children shall not be ruined, nor become victims to their mother’s ingratitude, extravagance, and maternal neglect.”

“What is it you mean?” asked she, every feature working with her new felt emotions.

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"I intend," he replied, "to inform your guests to-morrow morning, that this day week I shall leave England for three or four years."

"Leave England!" she exclaimed, "what then is to become of me, pray?"

"You may if you please accompany me and your children; but if you cannot make up your mind to bear with society so unsuitable to *your years*, and so indifferent to your heart, you may reside at one of my country houses,—but two hundred a year is all I shall allow for your support."

"*Two hundred a year!*"

"Yes, Madam, a much larger income I believe than your father possessed to bring up his whole family.—Be that as it may, I shall not exceed that sum for your annual expenditure, if you separate yourself from me and your children.

"Oh, Martha!" added he, with a deep sigh, "you have destroyed the illusion of happiness I had foolishly pictured to myself when

when I married an amiable uncorrupted girl, whose heart you deceptively taught me to believe I wholly possessed. Soon indeed the veil was withdrawn that had hoodwinked my reason; but I allowed much for youth, and the novelty of your situation. Your power over my heart was unbounded; and from excusing your faults at first, I began to lose sight of them, and submit my sentiments and inclinations, my every earthly wish, to the sole purpose of making you happy. Even your indifference, your unbounded extravagance, and the consequent embarrassments you have brought upon me, would have been endured without reproach, though not without pain. I flattered myself that a few months of retirement would endear your children and their father to that heart, dissipation had wholly possessed when in the vortex of the world.

“All, every thing, I could have forgiven, but those recent proofs of a depraved and corrupted mind,—insolence, ingratitude,

ingratitude, a total want of consideration for me and your family, by inviting here without my knowledge, the persons who of all others you well knew were most detestable to me, added to your inhumanity towards an unfortunate unoffending orphan I wish to protect. Such unquestionable traits of a bad heart, have irretrievably lost my esteem, and little, you must be conscious, can remain of affection. You have restored me to myself; no longer the slave of an artful woman, you will henceforth learn a new lesson,—*that of obedience*; for be assured I will be the master and director of my family."

No description can give an idea of the astonishment, rage, and vexation, which overwhelmed Lady Marsh at this new and decided language, accompanied by an air of determined resolution, and a look of contempt and reproach which Sir Robert threw at her as he quitted the room.

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Neither were the latter of the
rowly without their respective merits. The
former was a man of letters and of great
he admired Lady Anne. He was not without
out hope of being a successful candidate in the
course of the winter. He therefore
felt no small alarm when he perceived the
avowed intention of marrying. He was too
much disconcerted to make any plan
for the entertainment of the ladies.

Mr. Harcourt was a man of a singular
manners, without fortune. He knew Miss
Charlotte Bruce, but on enquiry found
that she was entirely dependant on her
mother; and he was well convinced she
was too much a woman of the world, to
give her daughter a fortune, without cer-
tain preliminaries and settlements not at
all agreeable to his taste or circumstances.

After weighing all his chances against
almost certain contingencies, he soon con-
cluded his wisest plan would be to address
the mother; who though neither very
young,

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yet still there was a weight hung heavy on his heart. Still he found his wife was twined about it so closely, that however displeased with her conduct, injured by her extravagance, and disgusted with her inhumanity to a poor orphan, and her want of consideration for him, when he came to the proof of leaving it to her own choice either to accompany him against her inclinations, or remain behind with a very slender income, the alternative made him shudder,—for without her he must be miserable.—Though resentment had raised a temporary contempt and indifference, like Sir Francis Wronghead, “he could not hold it,” but in the first moment she artfully threw a soft dejection in her countenance, and spoke in a tone of kindness when he expected only reproach and displeasure, away flew anger, indifference, and disgust; he warmly embraced her, and without reverting to the past, or speaking of the future, the present hour was all harmony and peace.

Sir Robert had for some years been occasionally troubled by a flying gout, sometimes in his head and stomach very alarmingly; the medical people had endeavoured to fix it in the extremities, and he had several times tried the Bath waters for the same purpose, to no effect.

Whether the uneasiness of his mind or the state of his affairs had agitated his nerves, or the more painful sensations he had struggled with between love, and the vexation his lady's conduct for some time past had created in his bosom; whatever cause, whether accidental or constitutional, produced the sad effect, cannot be ascertained,—perhaps both combined to throw the gout into his stomach with such violence the following day, that in twenty-four hours the worthy baronet became its victim and ceased to breathe.

Lady Marsh was the counterpart of Mrs. Bruce, she rejoiced secretly at her liberty, while tears and lamentations annoyed the
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the whole house.—The first consideration was elegant and becoming mourning; but in a short time a second and a more serious one occupied her whole heart—was there a will?

Sir Robert had, when he married her, settled a jointure of six hundred a year on her, in case of having children; but in defect of issue, she was to have a thousand a year and ten thousand pounds. He had, she knew, frequently talked of making a will since the birth of his two girls, but whether his intention had been carried into effect, she knew not; and was now, of course, very anxious to learn.

The estates of Sir Robert were entailed, and having no male heir became the property of a distant relative;—he had, however, several leaseholds, and before he married, a very handsome funded property.—But his ready money had all been drawn out, and his estates embarrassed by frequent and large demands on his steward, who had

been compelled to obtain money in advance by borrowing of the wealthy tenants.

The sudden death of their master caused a general consternation in the family. He was beloved by his servants, and doated on by his little girls, to whom he was a fond and tender father, and much more attentive to their comfort than his lady wife; who seldom saw them more than once a day for an hour, and not even that when she had company or was otherwise engaged.

But how impossible to delineate the effect this sudden blow had upon the feeling heart of poor Fanny!—She almost adored the good man who to her was the representative of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, the only being that she looked up to for protection, or that seemed to have the least interest in her fate. In a short space of time she had, by a concurrence of circumstances, been bereft of every friend. Dr. Douglas she had not heard of for a long time,—Meredith was abroad on his travels she knew not

not where,—Miss Betterson had left the country,—and now, without a home, without a friend, and almost a stranger to the world, in her thirteenth year, she was left solely dependant on Lady Marsh, who, she had discernment enough to observe, and proofs sufficient to assure her, most cordially hated her.

Her young companions gave her tear for tear; but *they* knew not, *they* could not feel the agonizing sorrow, the melancholy apprehensions which tortured the heart of the poor unfortunate girl who had neither parent nor friend. They remained undisturbed in the nursery; the children were measured for their mourning, no notice was taken of Fanny, though every creature in the house beside were to shew that last token of respect to the memory of their worthy master.

The morning subsequent to this melancholy event, Raymond, the steward, who had lately come up from the park, asked to be admitted to his lady, and in the pre-

sence of an attorney and his clerk, as witnesses, he produced a will. Lady Marsh was all agitation, and taking it from him broke the seals, but too much flurried to be capable of reading it, she gave it to the attorney, desiring he would communicate the contents to her.

Sir Robert's grandfather, by his will, had cut off the entail by an agreement with his eldest son, to pay his debts and furnish him with a sum of money to quit the kingdom, from circumstances of a peculiar disgraceful nature, which compelled him to reside in a distant country.

Sir Robert's father dying before his grand-father, the old gentleman had again entailed the estates upon Sir Robert and his heirs, or the nearest collateral branches, charging them with twenty thousand pounds to younger children, and confining the possessor of the estate to six hundred a year settlement on his wife if he had a male heir, otherwise

otherwise he might encrease it to the value of one thousand.

The uncle of Sir Robert had died abroad nearly at the same time that he succeeded to his grandfather's estates;—unfortunately he had no male heir, and only the two little girls, when he made his will on first coming down into the country.

The testament was very short and simple. He ordered all his leaseholds, town-house, furniture, plate, and every valuable to be sold; from the produce of which the sum of five hundred pounds was to be immediately paid to his wife, in addition to her settlement of six hundred a year. The residue, after a few legacies to his servants, to be added to the twenty thousand pounds bequeathed to the younger children, and to be equally divided among them. He named three gentlemen as trustees for them, without including the mother.

Such were the chief points in the will, and before Lady Marsh could give vent to the

the rage and indignation which overpowered and impeded utterance, the steward said, he had sent expresses to the gentlemen in trust.

This effectually roused her, and truly shocking and degrading to her sex was her passionate language and violence of behaviour;—the attorney left her a copy of the will, and gladly fled from her presence.

On Raymond, who she before disliked and now heartily hated, she bestowed the ebullition of her rage, in the most opprobrious language, which he bore without a reply; for in truth he respected her too little to be hurt by her violence, and was disturbed by an unexpected disappointment in the contents of the will.—He had hoped his good master would not have forgotten the young orphan, at least that he would have appointed some friend to take care of her;—he felt for her forlorn situation, and was ruminating on poor Fanny's fate while his lady was abusing him.

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At length she saw that he appeared wholly abstracted from any consideration of her, and stamping her foot, she bade him quit her presence.

Lady Marsh was certainly much provoked at the trifling sum of five hundred pounds being the only addition to her settlement, and more so at being wholly overlooked in the trust for her children. But when she reflected that this sudden event had preserved her from the disgraceful flight she had engaged in with Colonel Vincent, rather than accompany her husband abroad,—that she was now free, a tolerable jointure, and no impediment remained to a lawful connexion with the colonel,—she weighed the evil and the good, and was ready to own the latter predominated when her good stars had made her a blooming widow, and freed her from a hum-drum good kind of man, without spirit or fashion; and if her girls *were* placed
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in other hands, at least *she* was no longer responsible for their future destiny.

She sent off an express to Mrs. Bruce, with an account of what had happened, and appointed a day in the following week for meeting her at Ibbetson's hotel.

Not to dwell longer on this subject we shall only say, the trustees arrived, the funeral was performed, and as Lady Marsh expressed no wish to be charged with the education of her children, the gentlemen were convinced but little natural affection dwelt in her bosom, and therefore made no offer to leave them under her care.

When every thing was settled, so as no longer to require her presence, Lady Marsh was preparing to depart;—the servants were paid off, and then for the first time, Fanny appeared with the rest of the family.

Old Raymond had spoken in her behalf to the gentlemen, but they could do nothing for her as executors to the will, and no one but Lady Marsh knew that any provision

provision had been made for her education and support. Raymond supposed her dependant on his late master, and the poor forlorn being was without parents, friends, or a home.

Her appearance greatly interested the gentlemen in her favour. Lady Marsh saw the effect, and with a sudden affectation of compassion,—"Poor Fanny!" exclaimed she, "she has lost her only friend; but I will not desert her!—she shall go with me, I will protect her."

"You, Madam!" cried out Raymond, in a tone of surprise and disbelief.

"Yes, she will be a companion to me; since my children are taken from a mother's care, I will transfer my attentions to her."

The gentlemen warmly applauded her benevolence. — Raymond looked serious and incredulous, — Fanny tremblingly advanced to her ladyship who held out her hand to her,—"Take comfort, child," said she, "I will be your friend." The poor girl

girl dropped on her knees, and kissed her hand—speak she could not.—Lady Marsh ordered her servant to take care of Fanny, and to let her cloaths be packed, as she should take her in the carriage the following morning.

When the young unfortunate quitted the room, Raymond followed and stopped her.—“Did you ever know or hear, that any provision was made for you?” asked he.

“I have been told,” answered she, weeping, “that Mrs. Fitzwilliam left me money for education and cloaths.—Dr. Douglas and Sir Robert have said so, and Mr. Meredith told me so also, and that I should never want a friend whilst he lived.”

Raymond enquired where he was to be found?—She was wholly ignorant.—“Well,” said he, “what my lady means I cannot pretend to guess;—she may be your friend, or why should she take you.—However, let me hear from you, Miss Fanny, I will give you an address to-morrow morning.

morning. My means are but small, and I have three grand-children, nevertheless you shall find a friend in me to set you forward if my lady does not use you well;—so cheer up and fear nothing, God protects the orphan.”

Fanny wept abundantly as she thanked the good man, and then repaired to the nursery.—She was much grieved to leave her young companions, and began to think her own lot not so *very severe*, since they had lost a father, and were taken from their mother by strangers, to go they knew not where.

The next morning, at an early hour, she was called to attend her lady.—After taking an affectionate leave of the little girls (who grieved more at parting with her than from their mother), she received a letter privately from Raymond, and stepped into the carriage to accompany her new protectress.

The sudden resolution Lady Marsh had adopted to take care of Fanny, proceeded from

much better retire to some good country town, where her title and small fortune, would possibly procure her some sort of respect.—In London she could not exist upon six hundred a year.”

Lady Marsh had neither a strong mind, nor a cultivated understanding; but she had natural good sense, a quick conception, much vanity, was not by any means deficient in pride and spirit, and with more than a tolerable share of confidence.

Her surprise and resentment at this unlooked for reception exceeded all bounds of moderation.—“ I am neither thankful for your observations or advice, Madam,” said she. “ My income, such as it is, will always place me above insult, or impertinent liberties; and my title, I presume, will give me a rank in society above the woman who has only riches to boast of, and who has neither youth nor beauty to attract admiration. Your friendship I perceive has not outlived the change in my situation;

situation; but as the Scotch phrase is, '*bide a bit*,' possibly before long, Lady Marsh may be equal to you in fortune, as she is superior to you in rank."

She had spoken with energy, and with an imposing air that silenced Mrs. Bruce, on whom she threw a look of scorn and contempt as she left the room.—Not that she was insensible to the affront she had received, for it was with difficulty she suppressed the stormy passions that swelled in her bosom; but she had sense enough to know that coolness and disdain were more mortifying than passion and reproaches.

She returned to the hotel most exceedingly agitated; in her heart execrating her husband for exposing her to such insults, by his avarice, and illiberal provision for the widow of a baronet.

The first object she met was Fanny Thompson; and instantly recollecting that she was primarily the cause of Sir Robert's displeasure, and that she had taken the

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girl chiefly with a view to gratify Mrs. Bruce by humbling the poor being she so unjustly detested, she no sooner cast her eyes upon her, than all the angry passions she had struggled to repress, flamed out. As she unconsciously advanced with a smiling countenance to meet her protectress, she was stunned by a violent blow in the face, accompanied by these words,—"Get out of my sight, you little viper, —I wish I had never seen your cursed face!"

The footman who followed his lady, caught the poor girl as she fell against the wainscot; and seeing she was incapable of speaking or moving, he led her into a room, and procured some water.

When a little recovered, she exclaimed, in a tone of agony,—“Oh! Samuel, what have I done?”

“By my soul!” replied he, “I cannot tell; my lady seemed in a great passion when she got into the carriage.—I think something had put her out of humour at

Mrs.

Mrs. Bruce's, for she flounced out of the house ——”

“ Oh!” cried Fanny, interrupting him, “ I know they are all my enemies, why I know not; but 'tis they have set my lady against me.—How unhappy I am!”

“ Phoo, Miss, don't mind them; when her passions are cooled, it will be all over.”

Samuel left her, and she retired to a room appropriated for her and the lady's woman. Here the poor girl cast a retrospective eye on all her past sufferings, her present dependant situation, and hopeless futurity. Some time was passed in tears; and the idea of again appearing before Lady Marsh struck her with terror. She recollected good old Raymond, and hastily searched her pocket for the letter he had put into her hand; alas! she had it not, it was lost, dropped she supposed in the carriage.

She flew down stairs in search of Samuel, to whom she related her loss; and begged

L 2

him

him to examine the coach, as the letter was of great consequence to her. He good-naturedly went to the livery stable immediately; but the letter was not to be found, for in truth 'twas in the possession of Lady Marsh.

Fanny had slipped it outside of her pocket, and as she got out of the carriage it dropped.—Her ladyship saw a sealed letter and hastily secured it. It did not directly recur to her memory, in the hurry of giving orders, and her anxious desire to see Mrs. Bruce, who she expected would have met her at the hotel.

Not waiting to send a messenger to her dear friend, early in the morning she hurried to her house;—her reception we have related. Stung to the soul by the cold insinuation of her supposed dear friend, she flung herself into the carriage, agitated by rage and resentment. Accidentally, in taking out her bottle of eau de luce, she felt

felt the letter she had till then forgotten to examine.

The kind hearted old steward had given Fanny much good advice to behave well to her lady; at the same time expressing his doubts and fears of the continuance of her kindness, as he had no opinion of her humanity or good nature. For her sake, *he wished he might be mistaken*, at all events he would serve her to the best of his power; and added his address, that should she ever want a friend to recommend her, she might write to him.

At such an unlucky hour to meet with this letter, irritated her most violently; and glad of an object on whom she could vent her ill-humour, she resolved to make the girl severely suffer, both for the impertinence of Mrs. Bruce, and the saucy freedom of old Raymond.

Fanny, unconscious of any offence, had hastened to the door, and in an instant received the blow, without the preface of a

word or a menace; for the words she passionately uttered were lost to the sufferer, who was stunned by the injury she had received.

This severe loss and disappointment was a painful aggravation to the sorrows of the unfortunate girl; who remained in the chamber, not daring to appear until summoned by her lady.

Lady Marsh had been considering in the mean time in what way to revenge herself on Mrs. Bruce, and get rid of this detested girl; who she had taken charge of merely to gratify that lady's malice, and with a view of humbling her pride, and reducing her to the lowest dependance on herself.

She now gave up the idea of keeping her, as Raymond might find her out; and she would be not only an incumbrance, but a spy upon her actions.

After some deliberation, she sent an order to Fanny, not to unpack her clothes; but bundle up what she had, as she should

see

see her no more, but send her to Mrs. Bruce.

She wrote a few lines to that lady, saying, "as Sir Robert had left no directions respecting the girl, she, or her family, could not possibly have any concern with her in future; therefore as she had been adopted by the late Mrs. Fitzwilliam, and Mrs. Bruce was in possession of her sister's fortune, it was unquestionably her duty to provide for the good old lady's protegee.— She was quitting London immediately, consequently lost no time in sending the girl, and her baggage, where she had a right to expect a maintenance."

She then ordered four post horses, to set off for Bath, where she heard Colonel Vincent then was; waiting only the return of the servant, who was to leave the letter and the girl at the door.

"What words can describe the anguish of poor Fanny!—Unconscious of giving offence, disappointed by the cruel reverse

of her lady's apparent kindness, detesting Mrs. Bruce and her daughters, well knowing the ill-treatment she must experience from them, she was in an agony; her face swelled, and her eye inflamed by the blow, the most obdurate heart must have been softened at such accumulated distress.—She fell on her knees to the waiting gentlewoman, entreated to know her fault, and begged, for God's sake, she might not be turned out of doors and sent to Mrs. Bruce.

The woman was really shocked, and undertook to ask the compassion of her lady, but her reception quickened her return; she could only repeat the peremptory order, and hastily withdrew from that distress which she had not the power to alleviate.

The footman appeared, and Fanny, more dead than alive, was put into a hackney coach; the servant gave the order, and when they arrived at the door, she was in an agony of tears and trembling that really shocked the two men.—On knocking, a
servant

servant opened the door, to whom Samuel gave the letter, and almost dragged the poor girl out of the carriage, with an evident concern for a situation beyond his power to relieve.—He said,—“Lady Marsh sends this young miss, an acquaintance of your ladies, to their care, as she is leaving London directly.”—The man jumped on the coach box, and they were presently out of sight.

The servant of Mrs. Bruce was so extremely surprised at the quickness of the transaction, that for a few moments he stood staring at Fanny, who was leaning against the side of the door for support.—“Do our ladies know you—are you expected?”

“O, yes, they know me,” replied Fanny. She could say no more but dropped down senseless.

The man was not devoid of humanity; he ~~lifted her in~~ his arms into the house, and called a woman servant to attend her, while he brought in her box and bundle. She

was soon restored to life, and Mrs. Bruce's woman, who had attended her ladies on their visit to Lady Marsh, presently recognised her, expressing great surprise at her situation and appearance in their house.

When recovered, she was led to the housekeeper's room; when finding she was wholly unable to answer any questions, she was advised to rest, and conducted to a bedroom with much tenderness, and commiseration for her apparent distress.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XXVI.



"The eye that will not weep another's sorrows,
"Should boast no greater brightness
"Than the glare which reddens in the eye-balls of
the wolf."

WHEN Mrs. Bruce and her daughters returned from their morning visits, judge, reader, if it be possible, judge of their astonishment and indignation when perusing the letter from Lady Marsh; they also learnt that the unfortunate orphan was in their house, and ill on a bed where the housekeeper had placed her.

It

It is not in language to describe their rage.—The servant who had admitted her, and the humane woman who had compassion on her distress, were equal sufferers for their insolence and presumption in daring to receive the creature in their absence.

In vain they pleaded that the coach drove off and left her fainting at the door. —“There she should have lain till she could find her way back,” exclaimed the merciless woman; “is my house to be encumbered with wretches from the street?—Let her come to me immediately.”

When the servants were withdrawn, she read the letter a second time, and then Lady Marsh came in for her full share of abuse.—Miss Charlotte observed,—“That impudent woman is more to blame than the girl; what business had she to bring her to town, and throw her upon them for support.”

Mrs. Bruce having thus a second object for the ebullition of her intemperate violence,

lence, she had pretty well exhausted every epithet rage and malice could invent, when the housekeeper led in the pale trembling girl ; whose misery swelled every feature in her face, and whose limbs could with difficulty support her as she entered the room.

So distressing was her appearance that the hard heart of Marianne could not repress some slight feelings of compassion, which impelled her to rise with a look of pity ; but which was as instantly changed by the severe glances of her mother and sister, whose callous hearts knew neither pity nor humanity.

Mrs. Bruce addressed her in language so cruel and insulting, that poor Fanny, unable to speak, dropped on her knees with a countenance so full of woe, that the housekeeper turned aside her head to wipe her eyes.

"You may leave the girl here, Chambers," said Mrs. Bruce, sternly: She withdrew.

drew.—Fanny was then interrogated how she dared to come to her for protection?’

“I came not,” she feebly answered, “I was forced into a coach, and dragged out of it at your door, where I fell down.—Lady Marsh has cruelly left me,—why, I cannot tell.”

“The impudent woman had no business to send you here; if she did not chuse to keep you, you might have been sent back to your parish.—I shall have nothing to do with you;—that old fool, my sister, ought to have known better than to burthen herself and her family with a child under such disgraceful circumstances.—You cannot stay here, I assure you.”

“O, Madam!” said she, again dropping on her knees, “O, Miss Bruces, have mercy upon me; pray don’t turn me into the street, where nobody knows me!—O, if I could but tell where Mr. Raymond lives! or knew where to write to Mr. Meredith!—he promised to be my friend,” added she, weeping bitterly,

bitterly, "but I have now lost all my friends!—Pray, pray do not put me into the street!"

"Well, for this night you may sleep with one of the servants, to-morrow I shall consider where to send you."

She rung the bell, and ordered "the girl to be taken away."

A long conversation ensued between the mother and her daughters, in what way to dispose of Fanny Thompson. — Charlotte observed, — if her cousin returned, and should hear that they had turned her into the street, it might give him a very ill impression of their conduct; and he was so particular, and so romantic, that the consequence might be prejudicial to them, and of greater advantage to her.

After a few moments of consideration, to their surprise and vexation, Mrs. Bruce thus addressed them:—"Within a fortnight I have engaged to give my hand to Mr. Harrowly, and it is my intention to place
you

you both as parlour boarders in some school of reputation, unless I meet with a respectable family who will receive you. I shall secure four thousand pounds to each of you, which you will receive at the age of five and twenty; till then the interest at five per cent. (as I shall place it in the funds), will pay for your board, and provide sufficiently handsome for your cloaths and pocket money. On your removal I shall of course discharge the servant who waits upon you;—and since this girl is thrown upon me, I shall henceforth place her under my woman as a second attendant, who will cost me next to nothing, and keep her constantly at her needle. This is the only arrangement I can make for her, and I flatter myself you must be perfectly satisfied with those I have proposed making for you."

The young ladies were silent, each looking for the other to speak; at length Charlotte gained courage to ask,—“If you choose to marry, Madam, must we therefore

fore be obliged to quit your house and protection?"

"Unquestionably you must!—and let me observe to you, Miss, that I have had no such proofs of your affection or respect as to make me desirous of keeping two tall girls in my house, as spies upon my actions; neither do I choose to drag about grown-up daughters as intruders on my friends or on my pleasures. Therefore, as you are now informed of my intentions, I shall, without delay, enquire for a situation agreeable to you and myself, where the independence I shall secure to you will ensure the respect due to gentlewomen; and on your own conduct will depend any future provision I may think proper to give you."

Observing they were both speechless, she withdrew to her dressing-room, bidding them remember they would meet company at dinner.

The conversation that ensued between the sisters, would be neither interesting or pleasing

pleasing to our readers, who are well acquainted with their selfish hearts and malicious dispositions. Without ever feeling love or respect for their mother, they now felt justified in the severest remarks on her conduct; and most bitterly regretted their entire dependance upon her.—But as their regrets and their censures availed nothing, they were compelled to dress and appear at the dinner table with a satisfied air; while their bosoms swelled with vexation and discontent.

As to Fanny, they gave her not a second thought; absorbed in their own concerns, she was too insignificant an object to have the smallest share in their reflections.

During this day of such importance to the ladies, Mrs. Bruce, who had not been perfectly at ease while hesitating in what manner to announce her intended marriage, gladly availed herself of a conversation to introduce the subject, by their consideration of Fanny's future destiny. The secret

cret. now revealed, she was all life and gaiety; the happy object of her regards was at the dinner table, and as the young ladies had wisely considered their own interests, they affected an appearance of attention to him, and wore smiles of pleasure on their features, very foreign to the real state of their hearts.

Meanwhile the unhappy orphan was overwhelmed by sorrow, mortification, and the most torturing doubts and suspense; terrified at every movement, shrinking from the opening of a door, and trembling at every voice.

The housekeeper had considerably sent her a plate of chicken and a tart, but her appetite was lost in painful reflections of what was to become of her—she could not eat. Sometimes the voice of merriment reached her ear from the dining parlour, the unbidden tear flowed down her cheeks, “Ah,” said she, “they are all happy!—Every one has some friend or relation but me,—

me,—I am alone, without one being feeling for my hapless destiny—a poor outcast!—O, why did I leave Mrs. Frampton's!—Yet she too might have turned me from her house, when Sir Robert died, and no one would pay for me.—O, that I was in Heaven, where I hope my parents are! Whatever shocking things they say of my poor mother, I wish I was in the grave with her!”

Thus did the unfortunate girl grieve, and dwell on her distresses for many hours.—At length Mrs. Chambers appeared, and taking her hand,—“My good child,” said she, “make yourself easy, my lady has consented that you shall remain here, under the care of her woman, Mrs. Wilkins.—You will have only to work at your needle and attend upon the ladies sometimes, and Mrs. Wilkins and I will make you as comfortable as we can.”

Her first emotions were all joy, so great had been her apprehension of being driven from the house.—But in a few moments she

she said,—“ Did you say I was to wait upon the Miss Bruces ? ”

“ Yes, my dear, they have consented to it,” replied Mrs. Chambers.

“ Ah ! ” cried she, lifting her eyes to Heaven, “ their aunt, my beloved protectress, never suffered me to *wait upon any one* !—I was always their companion and little friend when she lived. Whether they would or not, she made them kind to me before her,—and now ——— ” again she burst into tears.

“ Indeed ! ” said the housekeeper, “ did you live with their aunt ? ”

“ O, yes, she was my protectress—my mother,—and so kind before she died, and left me, Mr. Meredith said, enough money to pay my schooling, and keep me handsomely.”

Mrs. Chambers was surprised and shocked ! She saw there was something wrong in the behaviour of her ladies to the unhappy little girl ; and that young,
and

and abandoned as she seemed to be by every friend, she had great sensibility, and a sort of proper pride, that felt the degradation of her situation, though forlorn and friendless.

She would not, however, ask her any questions, or seem to notice her involuntary expressed dislike to waiting on the ladies; on the contrary, she assured her, her task would be easy, and working with her needle her chief employment.

Fanny, a little consoled by her kindness, and relieved from the dreaded apprehension of being expelled the house, her bosom grew more tranquil, and after a few sighs of expiring, or rather we may call it suppressed pride, she resolved to submit herself to obey Mrs. Bruce, and wait with patience the return of Mr. Meredith, who she still hoped would prove her friend.

Happily there is in young minds always a spring of hope at hand to lessen the sense of present evils, and point out future prospects

pects of good, when the first feelings of sorrow subside. Fanny had suffered so much in the terrible apprehension of being thrown into the street, without a house to shelter her, or a single creature to whom she could apply to save her from every evil, to which her forlorn situation must unavoidably have exposed her; that however repugnant to her feelings to be the waiting maid of the Miss Bruces, she had sense enough to draw a comparative degree of comfort, in being permitted to remain in their house under any circumstances.

"They will mortify me," said she, sighing, when alone, "I know they will take a pleasure in seeing me their servant; but I had mortifications enough at school, —I was impatient under them, now I must be humble and obliging. If they break my heart, all my troubles will be over; if I live, I may one day or other see Mr. Meredith by living here.—Yes, that hope shall make me bear every thing."

After

After this soliloquy she went to rest; and the following morning was called upon to wait on Mrs. Bruce to take her commands. Her reception was less painful than she expected. She was ordered to sit in the housekeeper's room, and work *only for her lady*—the Misses had nothing to do with her. She was to attend her dressing room, and assist her woman; and if she was docile and industrious, she should remain in her family.

Such were the commands of Mrs. Bruce, and Fanny joyfully promised to obey them. She was so delighted, so relieved by being freed from the authority of the young ladies, whose insolent contempt she so greatly dreaded, that the employments destined for her appeared as pleasures, in comparison to what she had feared from her former companions.

Nothing material occurred in Fanny's situation in the course of a fortnight, but a general order from her lady to dress plain, and

and becoming her situation. Her wardrobe, by the indulgence of her former friends, was ill-calculated for the place she now held in the family of Mrs. Bruce; therefore two suits of plain decencies were added to her morning gowns, and her best clothes committed to the care of Mrs. Chambers.

To this regulation she made not a single murmur or objection, but with admirable patience and industry, devoted herself to the duties required of her; and by so doing, obtained the good word of every one except the young ladies, who never condescended to bestow on her the least notice.

Mrs. Bruce had her hours wholly engaged by preparation for her marriage.— Mr. Harrowly had made no enquiries relative to her fortune; neither had she interrogated him on the subject of his. She saw he lived at an expensive hotel, that he had a genteel establishment of horses and

grooms, dressed well, and was received among the first classes of society; of his fortune therefore she had no doubts,—yet she was too much a woman of the world not to take some care of herself.

Above fifty thousand pounds was too large a sum to throw into the hands of any man, nor did she chuse to be dependant; wisely considering the possible chances that men were not *always* what they appear to be in the days of courtship, she secured twenty thousand pounds in the hands of trustees, for her sole and separate use—exclusive of the four thousand to each of her daughters, which indeed was not included in the fifty thousand, her whole property amounting to little less than sixty thousand pounds.

Of this transaction not a syllable transpired, either to Mr. Harrowly or her daughters. The intended bridegroom was pretty well informed of the money she possessed; and

and had not the slightest suspicion of her provident reserve.

Four days previous to her marriage, she conducted her daughters to the house of Mrs. Langmere, a widow lady, in Great Ormond Street, who kept a carriage, lived in an elegant style, and received six young ladies, at a hundred a year,—“merely as society for herself and daughter, without a view or desire of any pecuniary advantage.”

This liberality met with the deserved return, for with the Miss Bruces her number was complete.

The young ladies were not ill pleased with their situation; though by no means satisfied with the four thousand pounds, instead of ten which their aunt had designed for them. They accused their mother of avarice and injustice; and the absurd folly of marrying a man near twenty years younger than herself, gave a finish to her character, which they were not sparing in holding forth as an object of ridicule.

indelible impression on her mind; from that hour she grew extremely cautious and reserved.

The succession of painful and mortifying circumstances that had attended her, considerably strengthened her reserve, and gave a sombre colour to her mind; which repulsed all the endeavours of Mrs. Chambers to unlock her heart, and disclose her little history. That she was once a protegee of Mrs. Fitzwilliam, and a favourite of Mr. Meredith's, was the extent of her confidence; and to be henceforth secret in her thoughts, and cautious of speaking of former events, was the settled purpose of her mind, from which no art or persuasions could make her swerve.

Still her heart was not hardened, it glowed with sensibility and affection; but, alas! she had no kindred spirit to share it — no one who seemed really interested in her fate, or of a similar disposition, therefore she incurred the reproach of being proud

proud and unsocial, while her study was, not to offend a single being in the house.

No circumstance whatever could induce her to deviate from truth; but she evaded curiosity, and was best pleased to be alone.

Such was the disposition engendered by imposing circumstances, contrary to the natural bent of a good and ingenious mind. She felt the humiliation of accepting the niggard half-guinea from a woman she feared and despised; but she recollected her station in the family, and received it with silent humility.

The first weeks, or as it is called, the honey-moon of marriage, was passed in splendid entertainments and a crowd of company; but when all their friends had visited the happy pair, and a little cessation ensued to their tumultuous enjoyments, Mr. Harrowly one day took advantage of an idle hour, to ask his lady in what way her fortune was secured. The truth was, he had previously enquired at the Bank,

and learnt that only thirty-two thousand pounds was invested there in her name. Somewhat surprised, he however supposed she might have laid out her money in more profitable securities. He had several days wanted to introduce the subject, but was conscious a similar investigation would not be very pleasant to him, or satisfactory to her; at length interest and curiosity could no longer be suppressed, and the enquiry was made.

She felt a little confused at an apparent want of confidence in him, and she replied,—“All the money I have the power to dispose of, is in the three per cents.”

“To what amount, Madam?”

“I believe,” answered she, hesitatingly, “about thirty-two thousand pounds.”

“Thirty-two thousand pounds!—Surely that sum cannot be half of the property you possess!—What the devil! you can’t make me believe you could keep up such an establishment on such a paltry sum.”

“Paltry!”

"Paltry!" repeated she, not a little hurt by his air and expressions. "Paltry! I cannot look at thirty-two thousand pounds as a *paltry sum*.—But I settled four thousand on each of my daughters, and that was not half what was intended for them by their aunt."

"*Madam*, the world reported your fortune to be at least a hundred thousand."

"The world were mistaken then, as very possibly it may be in speaking of your's; yet I do assure you, what you possessed was no object of my enquiry, as I had no doubts either of your fortune or your honour, in making a suitable settlement on me, equivalent to the money you would be master of, when I gave you my hand."

"You are very cunning and evasive, my dear; but I ask you plainly, and expect a plain answer,—have you any estates or other monies on securities?"

"I have not," said she, provoked at his pertinacity.—"I am not in possession of any other sums, nor any estates."

M 5

"Then,

"Then, by Heaven, I am confoundedly taken in, that's all,—for 'tis impossible to keep up our establishment upon the interest of that funded property."

"But Mr. Harrowly, surely my love, with the addition of *your fortune*, in the style *you lived*, it cannot be necessary to lessen our establishment."

"Why really, my dear, my fortune will not come into my hands, I fear, for some time;—and it appears to me that I have been plaguily deceived as to your property, and that you have been an absolute impostor on the world, who have given you credit for a hundred thousand.—Your expensive style of living has countenanced the report, and I took it upon trust, not either doubting "*your honour or your fortune*." However, just now no alteration can be made, and when my fortune comes into my possession, you may be assured of a suitable settlement. So, my dear lady, enough of this day's explanation."

Mrs.

Mrs. Harrowly, though horridly provoked and disappointed, could not venture farther to urge any enquiry relative to his expected fortune.—She now heartily congratulated herself on her prudent reserve,—all she feared was that it might come to his knowledge, she therefore wrote to her trustees, requesting their absolute silence on the subject.

Mean time her young husband was resolved not to be tricked out of his liberty, and live dependant upon her. That very morning he had seen an advertisement in the paper of a cottage, garden, and small farm, to be disposed of on a lease of twenty years, in Merionethshire, two miles from a small market town.—It struck him at the time, that it would be a desirable retreat for his wife when he had possession of her money.

He was so greatly involved, that her money in the funds would afford him a very moderate style of living, if obliged to pay
his

his debts. Excessively enraged and disappointed by the comparative small sum to what he had been led to expect, he was now, more than ever, resolved to be rid of her. He made enquiries about the cottage, the description was much in its favour, it was to be had, furniture and all the stock for a few hundreds.

Without seeing, or even making any enquiry on the spot relative to its accommodations (for *he was not to live in it*), he bought and paid for it at once; and in a fortnight after, just nine weeks from their wedding day, he told his lady, one small estate had fallen into his hands, and requested she would accompany him to see it, as, if it met with her approbation, it should be part of the jointure he intended to settle on her.

Charmed by this specious tale, Mrs. Harrowly congratulated herself on having a husband so generously disposed towards her,

her, after appearing to be disappointed in the amount of her fortune.

No time was lost in preparation for this desirable journey. — Fanny of course remained with the housekeeper, Mr. Harrowly thought the attendance of Mrs. Wilkins unnecessary, but his lady would not, could not, she said, dispense with her services; and he was too polite to dispute the point with her.

Nothing particular occurred in the journey;—they arrived in due time at Langolen-Cottage, which was really as neat and pleasant as it had been described; though the country round was mountainous. The weather was fortunately very fine, and the prospects extensive, and had also the charm of novelty; so that Mrs. Harrowly had nothing to find fault with, and he was at liberty to attach what value he pleased to the estate. Servants absolutely necessary were soon procured, and though “both the women were uncouth in their language and

and manners, they answered well enough for their purpose in the short time they should stop at the cottage."

So thought, so said, the lady of the mansion; and during six days she was extremely amused by airing every day "round her estate," and by the respect of the poor cottagers and tradespeople in the neighbouring town.

But Mrs. Harrowly was not disposed to remain long from dear London. Though spring was far advanced, and the circles of fashion would soon take their flight to watering places, yet there was still a few weeks in which she might display her bridal finery, and select her society for the summer months. When the week was completed, she ventured in the sweetest manner possible to express a gentle hint, "that having seen all the beauties in and round Langolen-Cottage, with which she was delighted as a present from her beloved Mr. Harrowly, she should like, if agreeable to him, to return

turn to London, not having yet paid all her bridal visits."

Mr. Harrowly, in the most complaisant manner, imitating his lady's tone, gave more than a gentle hint, "that he intended she should pass the summer at *her own estate*, which he was happy to find was agreeable to her taste.—Some very particular business obliged him to be in London for a few days; but it would be a ridiculous and useless expence and fatigue for her to journey up and down, when he had determined not to exceed five or six days being in London."

He might have talked on; she was so surprised and shocked as to be incapable of speaking for some moments, still she suppressed her growing rage,—“Do I hear right, Mr. Harrowly—do you purpose going to London without me?—Am I to be confined the whole summer among the mountains in Wales?”

“Not confined, my dear, you will have a large range round the neighbourhood of
Langolen;

Langolen, and doubtless some visitants when you are known to be a resident; but *your fortune*, Mrs. Harrowly, will not support the style you have lived in, with the addition of my establishment, therefore, I advise you to rusticate, and save during the summer months, that you may appear among your former society with éclat in winter."

No words can describe the feelings of Mrs. Harrowly!—Thrown off her guard by such an unexpected arrangement, and fired by the sneer which accompanied the words, *your fortune*, she forgot all the softness of a bridal tone, and after the most bitter reproaches, for seducing her to visit this desert frightful country, she assured him she should not countenance his contemptible mean views;—her income had, and would still support *her* former consequence, and surely his own, would now, as well as ever, be sufficient for his establishment.

"You say right, my dear," replied he, with the most provoking non-chalance, "my income

income *now* will certainly be not lessened from what it was when I married you.— But, to have done with all further altercation, I set off to-morrow morning for London, you will remain here;—I shall take care to send your trunks and wardrobe to you without delay. I have already told you my stay in London will be only a very few days; *when I return here* this subject may be renewed, and if you can convince me that your income will justify the expences you have accustomed yourself to, you shall find me neither unreasonable nor unpersuadable.”

Twice during this harangue his lady had been on the point of betraying the secret of her reserved settlement, and demanding her freedom to go where she pleased; but as he proceeded she fortunately repressed her rage, and at the conclusion, resolved to wait his return, and be determined by circumstances. But though she suppressed the turbulence of passion, she could not assume an appearance of satisfaction, much less her usual

usual fondness to her "beloved husband." If she was not sullen, she was far from being cheerful.

It was otherwise with Mr. Harrowly. When the disagreeable subject dropped he resumed his good humour, and endeavoured to entertain her by proposing a number of embellishments to Langolen-Cottage; talking of the beauty of the country, and hospitality of its inhabitants.—She paid little attention to his propositions, and at length abruptly interrupted him to ask,—“What arrangement was to be made with the servants in town?—she could not exist with such ignorant wretches as were now about her.”

“Be not uneasy, my love, I will take care of every circumstance for your convenience; I think you will not accuse me, on my return, of omitting any thing conducive to your pleasure.”

She knew not what to say, she saw it was in vain to question him, for his air and words appeared affectionate, and afforded her no pretence to quarrel, or insult him,

OR

or if she did, would it be any advantage to her for the present.

She now rejoiced at her prudent reserve, but then again she could derive no benefit from the interest without his knowing she had such an addition to her expenditure.

Tormented by many apprehensions, and doubtful of his intents, she passed a sleepless night, conscious that she had acted very imprudently by not informing herself of his fortune and connexions before she gave him her hand; for as a woman of the world, as one who had been no novice in mean and deceptive arts, she ought to have reflected, how many in this great city, "live the Lord knows how, and the Lord knows where," forcing their way into society by their wits, and their gambling propensities. She could not be ignorant that numbers of both sexes are tolerated in fashionable circles most exceptionable in their situations and morals, if they dress well, play high, and contribute their quota to the follies and entertainment of their companions.

In

In this class Mr. Harrowly must undoubtedly be ranked; he was bred to the law, but nearly when released from a five years bondage, his father, who had a place under government, died; and left him about two thousand pounds.

Coke and Lytleton were instantly discarded; he bought horses, appeared on the turf, passed himself for a young fellow just fallen into a large fortune;—was noticed according to his appearance without much investigation, admitted to the card clubs, and at the trifling expence of a few hundreds, was let into the arcana of the gambling societies.—'Tis true his two thousand pounds were very soon making their way through the town, but when once initiated into the "ways and means," he took his chance with others.—Fortune was now and then favourable, and enabled him to support his appearance among the dashers of the day, while his tradesmen in various parts of the town were waiting for his rents from his estates, "his d——'d steward being too indulgent

indulgent to his tenants, and obliging him to trespass on their forbearance."

He was driven almost to a state of desperation, and was meditating a flight to the Continent, when he was introduced to the parties of Mrs. Bruce by Colonel Vincent.

It has been already observed, that he felt a sort of preference for Miss Charlotte; but report having magnified Mrs. Bruce's fortune to a hundred thousand pounds, and added, that her daughters were dependant on her, he changed the object of his devoirs,—flattered, idolized the widow, was charmed, dying for the adorable Mrs. Bruce, and taking advantage of her folly and vanity, hastened on the marriage which was to put him in possession of riches, liberty, and independence.

Little did he imagine, that she had still prudence, still method, in her madness to be married, to secure a sum for herself.—

But when he found, on enquiry, that her fortune was scarcely one third of what he expected, then he considered that sum infinitely

initely too small to pay off his debts, and secure his independence, when fettered to a gay expensive woman for life.

There was but one alternative to choose, that of going to the Continent. He would not, however, rob her of all her property, — he had drawn out eight hundred pounds which he paid for Langolen estate, and was really well worth the money; and previous to leaving town had given directions for all the furniture, plate, and lease of the house to be disposed of by private contract, which when agreed for, he would come up to confirm the sale.

He had received a letter, within a few days after his arrival at the cottage, acquainting him that only his pressbox was wanting to complete every thing.

On the morning he proposed, he left his wife with the most perfect good humour and appearance of tenderness, assuring her, when he returned he would consult her comforts if he found her still averse to remain at Langolen.

To

To hasten through this nefarious transaction, we shall follow him to London, where he disposed of every thing but his wife's jewels.—Conscience stepped in there, and impelled him to place them, her wardrobe, and every article particularly appertaining to her, except the plate, with six thousand pounds, in the hands of an eminent banker.

So secretly had this business been carried on, that neither the Miss Bruces, nor any of her acquaintance, knew of the transaction till he had quitted the kingdom.

The following letter reached his astonished wife.

“ MRS. HARROWLY,

“ BE not surprised if we meet no more. Had your fortune been what it was reported to be, I could have paid my debts, and lived with you in your accustomed style; which was, let me tell you a deception on the world, and deserves punishment.

“ I

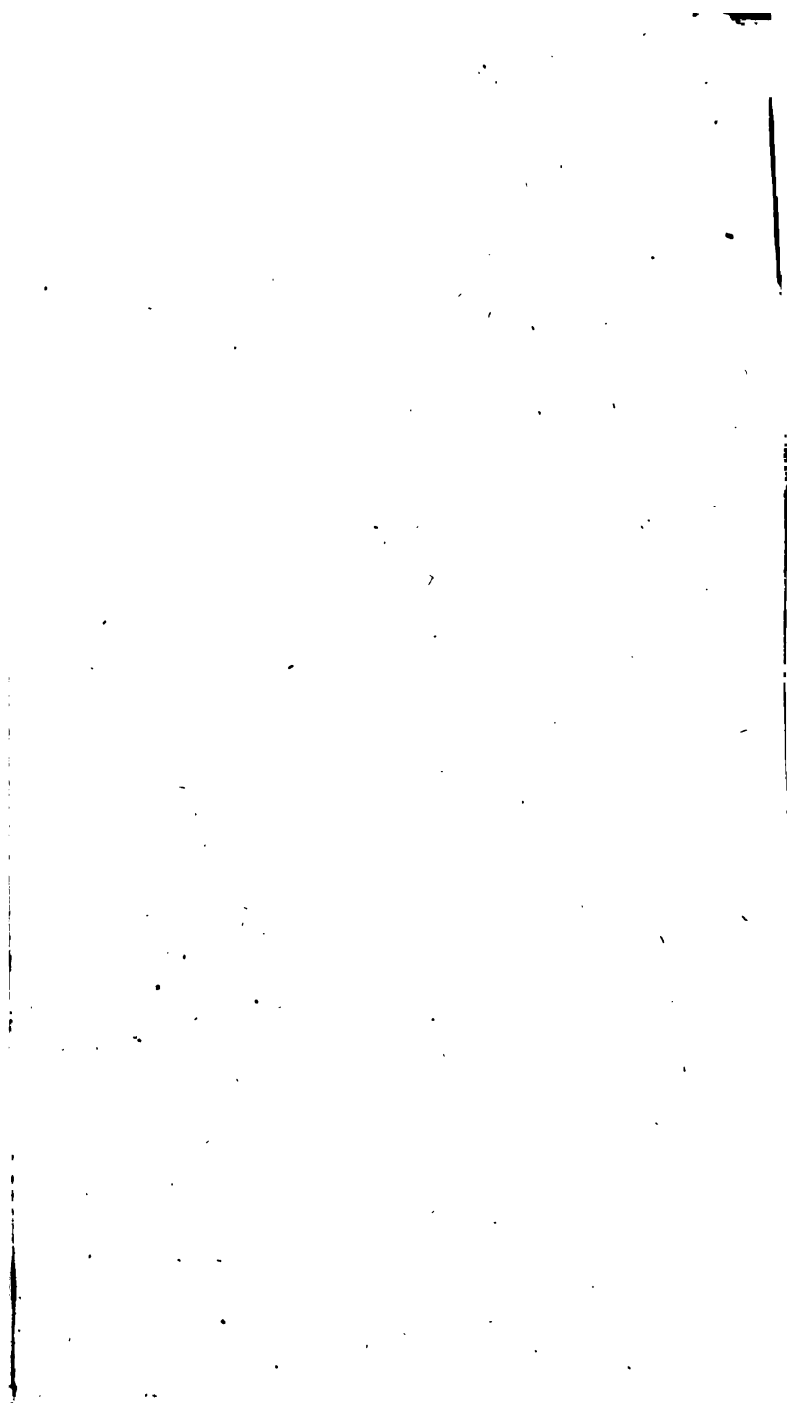
"I have purchased Langolen in your name, the deeds of which are in the hands of Mess. ————. Also your jewels, and chests of clothes, with six thousand pounds, the interest of which, and the produce of your estate, will maintain you in the country like a gentlewoman; your daughters being provided for, more is unnecessary.

"In all probability I leave England for ever. I sincerely wish you health, happiness, and a prudent management of your present income. The servants are all paid, and Mrs. Chambers has taken Fanny Thompson till she knows your pleasure. You will hear from her. I gave Chambers ten guineas with the girl, and another ten guineas to the poor thing herself.—I hope you will be kind to the poor orphan, for misfortunes humanize the mind, and teach us to feel for others. Adieu for ever!

"J. HARROWLY."

END OF VOL. III.

Ne.bury, Printer, Brentford.



The first of these is the fact that the
 government has been unable to
 maintain a stable currency. This
 has led to a loss of confidence
 in the government and a
 consequent loss of support
 from the people. The second
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 a stable economy. This has
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 is the fact that the government
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